1. **Introduction**

1.1. This is the fourth year in which my strategy paper is presented to the Spring-term Strategic Away Day Meetings of the SPC and Governors. Given the issues with new student enrolments for 2017-18, these Away Days will need to focus on student recruitment and related financial issues as well as the results of the student experience review 2017, which has the potential to enhance retention as well as the student experience in general. As last year however, I would also like these Away Days to focus on issues related to our 200th Anniversary in 2023, notably the Estates Strategy and the Fundraising Strategy which underpins it. Interestingly, the Fundraising Feasibility Study has raised significant issues regarding the public profile of Birkbeck, which in turn also relates to our position in International and National University League Tables.

1.2. In this paper, I will as usual discuss some of the achievements of the College in the last year. I will then discuss in turn each of our key areas of activity as represented by the Pro-Vice-Master (PVM) portfolios and carried out within each our five Schools. This paper will conclude with a discussion of the Estates Strategy, the Fundraising Strategy and issues related to Birkbeck’s public profile.

1.3. 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.
1.4. Achievements in the last year have involved all of our five Schools and each School is therefore discussed in turn.

2. **School of Arts**

2.1. Professor Dame Marina Warner (English) was awarded the British Academy Medal for Landmark Academic Achievement and also became the first female President of the Royal Society of Literature. Also in the Department of English, Professor Martin Eve was awarded the Medal of Honour in Humanities and Social Sciences by KU Leuven in Belgium recognizing his unique contribution to the field of Open Access publishing. He was also short-listed for the Guardian University Award for Inspirational Leadership and obtained a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to investigate the workings of the Peer Review Process and develop new methods to improve published academic work.

3. **School of Business, Economics and Informatics**

3.1. Dr Almuth McDowall (Organizational Psychology) was awarded the Ian Beardwell Prize for excellence in a research paper presented at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Conference. Her paper “Always on” found that compared to other countries, British Universities have made little progress in helping staff switch off after working hours. As well as this award to a member of staff, students in BEI were also successful in obtaining awards. David Kerr (BSc Accounting) won the Institute of Business, Ethics Essay Competition for his work dealing with ethical questions of tax avoidance. Similarly, Suzie Godson (PhD candidate) was the runner up in the Technology and Mobile Applications
Category of the Santander Entrepreneurship Award for her ME2 App which allows teenagers to post problems, share solutions and access expert help.

4. School of Law

4.1. Professor Bill Bowring was appointed Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, whilst Law PhD student Daniel D’Alva was runner up for the prestigious Colin Picker Prize in Comparative Law, for his study of Special Purpose Acquisition Companies.

5. School of Science

5.1. As usual there were a number of awards in our outstanding Department of Psychological Sciences. Professor Gergely Csibra was appointed a Foreign Associate of the US National Academy of Sciences, whilst Professor Mark Johnson and the late Professor Annette Karmiloff Smith were jointly awarded the Preyer Award from the European Association of Development for Psychology for their contributions to the understanding of Human Brain Development. Similarly, Professor Ulrike Hahn was awarded an Honorary Degree from the University of Lund, Sweden, and also obtained a £1 million award from the Intelligence Advanced Research Project Activity which specialises in supporting high risk high pay off programmes in the intelligence area. At a more junior staff level, Dr Iroise Dumontheil won the Elizabeth Warrington Prize of the British Neuropsychological Society for an outstanding early stage career researcher.

5.2. Similarly, in Earth Sciences, Professor Ian Crawford was appointed Vice-President of the Royal Astronomical Society.
6. **School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy**

6.1. Senior staff in different Departments of the School obtained prestigious awards. Thus, Professor Jennifer Hornsby (Philosophy) was appointed Fellow of the British Academy, whilst Professor Joni Lovenduski (Politics) who is already FBA was awarded the Academy of Social Sciences European Consortium for Political Research, Lifetime Achievement Award. Moreover, in History, Classics and Archaeology, Professor Frank Trentmann was awarded the Humboldt Prize given to an outstanding academic to allow them to spend six-twelve months researching in Germany. Professor Claire Callender, Professor of Higher Education Policy, was awarded an OBE for Services to Higher Education.

6.2. In addition, a recent graduate from the MSc in Public Policy and Management, Amr Sobhy was named one of the 100 most influential young Africans for his work as an activist using digital media to monitor the activities and performance of the Egyptian Government.

6.3. As well as awards to these individuals in the different Schools, the College was successful in our renewal application for a Bronze Award from the Athena Swan Scheme which recognizes institutions for their work towards Gender Equality. This parallels our successful applications for Bronze Awards in the areas of Biological Sciences and Psychological Sciences. These applications form part of our work in the equality area, led by the Equality and Diversity Committee.

7. **RESEARCH**
7.1. The awards 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 as well as those to individuals also receiving personal awards (see above). I will highlight a small number of such research grants which illustrate significant points concerning our research activities.

7.2. As reported last year, the Department of Biological Sciences was successful in obtaining a grant from the Wellcome Trust in excess of £1 million to purchase a Cryo-electron microscope. This was awarded under a standard Wellcome Scheme for the purchase of large research equipment. Subsequently however, the Department was invited to participate in a special call for proposals to establish a small number of centres in Cryo-electron microscopy and was successful in obtaining a £2.3 million grant to purchase the most up-to-date state-of-the-art Cryo-electron microscope. Similarly, one of our Professors in this area, Carolyn Moores was awarded a £1.7 million MRC Research Grant to study disease-causing defects in neuronal function.

7.3. Elsewhere in the School of Science, as well as these awards in the Department of Biological Sciences, there were also seven figure awards to the Department of Psychological Sciences. In addition to the award to Professor Hahn mentioned in the previous section, Dr Richard Cooke, our newly-appointed Reader in Psychology was awarded a £1.3 million grant from the European Research Council to investigate the role of Visual Perception in Social Interactions.

7.4. Although major grants were, as usual, concentrated in the School of Science, there were also major grants elsewhere in the College, notably a £1 million five-year Investigator Award from the Wellcome Trust to Professor Joanna Bourke.
(Department of History, Classics and Archaeology) to investigate “Sexual violence, Medicine and Psychiatry”.

7.5. Most importantly, the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems was part of a successful application for a £43 million Institute of Coding which was announced by the Prime Minister at the World Economic Forum. The £2 million allocated to Birkbeck will provide two additional posts to launch a new BSc in Data Science as well as supporting outreach activity to groups underrepresented in this area.

7.6. Although on a smaller scale, it is noteworthy that under the leadership of Professor Miriam Zukas (Birkbeck Champion for Public Engagement), the College was successful in obtaining a Public Engagement Grant from Research Councils U.K. This grant will provide strategic support to expedite embedding public engagement with the research done in the College to ensure our research involves the public and is communicated to them as effectively as possible.

7.7. In the research area, the College, under the leadership of the PVM for Research, Professor Julian Swann, is preparing for the next Research Excellence Framework (REF). This year, HEFCE announced a number of the rules for the next REF, having consulted on the recommendations of Lord Stern’s Review of the REF. Most importantly, institutions will now have to submit all staff with research in their contractual duties or provide a detailed explanation of why they cannot do so.

7.8. Given the very high proportion of our staff who have submitted to previous exercises (where submission was voluntary) we will certainly wish to submit all research active staff. Such staff will need to submit between one and five research papers for consideration by the panel with the overall average for a
particular unit of assessment, being 2.5 papers per individual and Universities being penalised for those staff without a single appropriate research output.

7.9. To prepare for our submission, Professor Swann conducted an output census review in 2017 so that we are fully informed of the current position in different Units of Assessment (UoA) and their ability to meet the 100% submission requirement. This will allow the relatively small number of staff currently without an appropriate research output to submit to be assisted in good time to produce one before the census date. For those who are unable to do so, we will need to review the activities of such staff to determine whether they make a significant contribution to teaching and administrative areas.

7.10. Similarly, rather than submitting the best four papers for each individual (as in previous exercises) we will need to compare papers for different individuals to determine, for example, whether an individual’s fifth best paper is better than another individual’s second best paper, so leading to a 5+1 submission for those two staff, rather than a 4+2 or 3+3 submission. Again the availability of the output census review will greatly facilitate our early analysis of this.

7.11. In parallel with this work on research outputs, work has continued on other parts of the REF submission. Thus a census of impact case studies has been carried out for all UoAs to ensure each has sufficient case studies of high quality. Similarly, a survey has been carried out of key environmental data such as PhD completions and research centres etc. comparing results to the last REF.

7.12. Preparation for the REF is only part of the wider research environment of Birkbeck. The College has more than forty active Research Centres or Institutes
and in June the Directors met as a group for the first time with a view to encouraging further interdisciplinary work. A new competition was launched offering College funding for collaborative projects bringing together two or more Centres or Institutes which will support conferences, workshops, joint research grant applications and other projects.

7.13. In 2017, the College also provided funds to run a new competition to select candidates for the prestigious Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship scheme, which provides three-year post-doctoral fellowships jointly funded by the Trust and the host institution. These are highly competitive with a success rate of below 20%. Following selection via an internal scheme, Birkbeck’s candidates performed exceptionally with Fellowships awarded in Archaeology, History, History of Art and Psychological Science, representing a success rate of over 40%.

7.14. The outstanding work of early career researchers at Birkbeck was further demonstrated by the large number and high quality of applications for the Ronald Tress Prize which is awarded annually for research of the highest quality carried out by an academic in the College, with no more than three years post-probationary experience as a University lecturer, Prizes were awarded to Dr Florian Steinberger (Arts and Humanities); Dr Ali Burak Guven (Social Sciences) and Dr Lara Maister (Science).

7.15. Good progress continues to be made with the redevelopment of the Birkbeck Graduate Research School which under the direction of its manager Tim Hoe provides support, generic training and academic and social events for our more than 800 PhD students. Regular timebound sessions, known as “shut up and write”, have been introduced to help PhD students accelerate the writing up
of their theses. Similarly, the first Birkbeck Three-Minute Thesis competition, organised by Mary Clare Hallsworth (Public Engagement Officer) and hosted by the BGRS, saw research students from across Birkbeck present their work. The prize was won by John Siblon from the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, who gave a fascinating talk on War Memory and representations of black colonial Servicemen in the aftermath of the First World War. Among the current projects underway in BGRS are the development of an on-line PhD manager system that will facilitate the work of both students and supervisors.

7.16. Finally, I am pleased to report that in November Birkbeck’s application for the HR Excellence in Research Award, led by Dr Sarah Lee and Hazel Lindley-Milton, was successful. The award recognises the College’s commitment to implementing the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (as required by our funders) and is likely to be a key feature in the new institutional environment assessment in REF2021. This will feed in to a broader review of research support and the future of the Birkbeck Research Support Office currently being led by Professor Swann.

8. INTERNATIONAL

8.1. Interestingly, given our focus in our teaching model on students living in London, the College continue to score highly in World University League Tables for its international impact. Thus, the THE World University rankings, rank the top 1,100 Universities worldwide (the top 5% of the world’s Universities) on a number of criteria including their international impact. This year, Birkbeck was ranked overall in the 300-350 category, which is disappointing, given that we have
appeared in the 200-250 category for the last two years but still represents a
good position, overall, particularly compared to our rankings in national league
tables.

8.2. However, more encouragingly, the College was rated in the top 100 on
international outlook which ranks Universities on the basis of their overseas staff
and students and their research collaborations. Similarly, the College was
strongly ranked for international students and staff in the rival QS World
University rankings. In the overall ranking, we slipped from 280\textsuperscript{th} last year to
308\textsuperscript{th} this year. However, this does represent a rise of over 100 places since
2015.

8.3. Following on from the Internationalisation Strategy agreed in 2016 under the
leadership of Professor Stephen Frosh, then PVM International, a number of new
international links have been established or developed further. For example,
both BEI and SSHP have established new partnerships with the Beijing Institute
of Technology, the Beijing Forestry University and the China Foreign Affairs
University which caters to aspiring Chinese Diplomats.

8.4. Similarly, building on the partnership with China’s South Western University of
Finance and Economics (SWUFE) established by BEI a number of years ago, a new
dual Undergraduate Degree Programme, has been introduced. This involves
students studying for three years in SWUFE (with some modules taught by
Birkbeck staff) and studying years four and five of the course in Birkbeck.
Students graduate with a Bachelor’s Degree in International Business from
SWUFE and a B.A. in Management from Birkbeck.
8.5. The new PVM International, Professor Kevin Ibeh, has already begun to develop this strategy further with proposals to link with other Universities worldwide which share our widening participation mission with a culture of research excellence.

8.6. As well as links with Universities worldwide, we have also developed support for foreign students to come to study at Birkbeck. For example, this academic year we welcomed nineteen Chevening scholars from seventeen countries under a scheme supported by the U.K. Foreign Office. Students study for Masters Degrees with a view to addressing economic, social and political issues in their home countries.

8.7. Similarly, Santander has recently awarded us a new three-year grant which includes a number of scholarships for students from Latin America, whilst Itau BBA International has supported two scholarships for students from Brazil to study at Birkbeck. Moreover, both students and staff have participated in Erasmus mobility programmes allowing them to spend time studying or researching in Europe.

8.8. Most importantly, our Compass project (funded by the Alix Foundation, Allen and Overy, etc.), has allowed 20 asylum seekers to be fully funded for undergraduate and postgraduate courses at Birkbeck. These students come from a range of countries including Congo, Iran, Russia, Syria and Zimbabwe. This project is of particular importance since asylum seekers cannot work or obtain student loans but are liable for international fees, rendering it impossible to study unless supported.
8.9. Overall, our developing international profile and student support packages have allowed us to increase the numbers of non-EU students at Birkbeck. Thus, enrolments in 2017-2018 for international non-EU students were 443, compared to 400 in 2016-2017, an increase of 11%. Applications from international non-EU students for 2018-2019 are significantly up (69%) on the same period last year from 1034 to 1750. The magnitude of this increase should be treated with caution, as the College opened applications early and many of the early applicants will be trying to obtain Chevening scholarships and will not join us if they are unsuccessful. Nonetheless, it appears that around two thirds of the additional applicants are not applying for Chevening awards and so this does represent a real increase.

8.10. This successful pattern of enrolments and applications for non-EU overseas students, contrasts with a less positive picture in the EU student area. Interestingly, following the referendum results, applications for 2016-2017 fell for EU undergraduate students, compared to 2015-2016 but Masters enrolments increased significantly as reported last year. This suggests that uncertainty about Brexit for postgraduate students was outweighed by the availability of postgraduate loans which were introduced for the first time in 2016-17.

8.11. Unfortunately, this positive result has not continued for 2017-2018 with applications from U.K. domiciled EU citizens falling by 25%. This was paralleled by reduced conversion from offer to enrolment for EU citizens domiciled in the U.K. which was 54% in 2015-2016 and in 2016-2017 but fell to 45% in 2017-2018. Overall therefore, enrolments of such students are down 40%.
8.12. Overall, EU student enrolment (both undergraduate and postgraduate and including EU citizens domiciled in the U.K. or in the EU) was down 26% in 2017-2018 compared to the previous year (601 FTE compared to 815 FTE). This effect has continued in terms of applications for 2018-2019 with applications by EU students domiciled in the U.K. down by 42% on 2017-2018, whilst applications from those domiciled in the EU are up by 10%.

8.13. Although the Government announced the continued availability of student loans and the application of Home fees for EU students beginning their courses in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 and guaranteed these for their whole course, this clearly has not had the effect of maintaining EU student enrolment. In particular, the losses in EU students domiciled in the U.K. suggest that such students lack the confidence that they will be in the U.K. for the full duration of their course and are therefore reluctant to commit to multi-year courses. In terms of individuals’ rights to remain here, this may be improved by recent Government announcements on the settled status of such individuals and their families. However, this will not deal with the fears of such individuals that their firms may leave the U.K. resulting in their need to relocate elsewhere.

8.14. It is clearly very difficult for Birkbeck to deal with this issue which affects us particularly since our EU students are predominantly domiciled in the U.K. rather than making the decision to come here for a specific period of study. We may need to develop innovative means of reassuring such students. This could include offering packages in which after one year of standard Birkbeck study, students can continue with face-to-face study (if they are still in the U.K.) or switch to a distance learning programme in order to complete their course. Such
a distance learning programme need not be a Birkbeck-specific one but might involve a credit transfer partnership with, for example, the University of London International Academy which specialises in such distance learning and with whom we already collaborate in a number of areas. As well as benefitting EU students, this type of package would benefit U.K. or Overseas students who need to relocate away from London during their course for work or family reasons.

8.15. Similarly, we need to build on the innovative intensive LLM in Law. This is aimed at students who come to Birkbeck for short intensive periods of study supplemented by distance learning in the intervals between such studies. A similar model is now used in our joint MBA with Central St Martins and in the Medical Humanities programmes in the School of Arts. Similarly, a number of courses including our Apprenticeship provision have a component involving work based learning. These models could clearly be adapted for EU students who return to work in countries in the EU but who could continue to come here for short periods combined with work based or distance learning. This would allow them to complete their degrees but still benefit from the Birkbeck model of face-to-face study. Moreover, there is no reason not to extend this offer to UK students or to students who need to relocate mid-course due to a change in their work or family circumstances.

9. EDUCATION

9.1. As reported last year, the Government introduced a new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in which Universities are rated gold, silver or bronze for their
teaching quality, paralleling the research excellence framework (REF) for assessing University research.

9.2. In this assessment, Birkbeck is considered a majority part-time provider. This resulted in our having two negative flags where our National Students survey (NSS) scores for “assessment and feedback” and for “academic support” were below our benchmark. This should have resulted in Birkbeck automatically being given a bronze rating.

9.3. However, the narrative section of the Birkbeck TEF application, which was led by our Pro-Vice Master for Education, Professor Diane Houston, successfully emphasized the unique nature of Birkbeck and our four positive scores above the appropriate benchmark for “teaching on my course” (NSS), “non-continuation” (HESA), “employment or further study” (DLHE survey of graduate destinations) and “highly skilled employment” (DLHE).

9.4. This resulted in Birkbeck being awarded a silver rating. The panel acknowledged Birkbeck’s work to attract and support students from diverse backgrounds, mature learners and those who would not otherwise have engaged with Higher Education. They also noted the Birkbeck institutional culture which “facilitates, recognizes and rewards excellent teaching and a curriculum at the forefront of research”. This is a highly satisfactory outcome, particularly since standard assessments of teaching do not normally do justice to Birkbeck’s unique nature.

9.5. Indeed, the think tank Wonkhe conducted a detailed analysis of each institution’s results in the TEF and REF. Institutions were placed in four quadrants corresponding to poor REF/poor TEF results, good REF/poor TEF results, poor REF/good TEF results and good REF/good TEF results. We were gratified to see
that Birkbeck was one of only thirty institutions placed in the top quadrant with good REF and TEF results, supporting our model of high quality teaching informed by research excellence which was specifically praised by the TEF panel.

9.6. In the future, we need to aim to increase our rating to gold particularly since future TEF cycles will rely less on NSS and more on outcome measures in which we do well. Indeed, in this regard, it is particularly gratifying that the recent educational outcomes salary data showed that our graduates have the 14th highest average salary in the U.K. (higher for example, than LSE or Queen Mary) and in particular, that our Economics graduates, have the 3rd highest salaries across all subjects at all U.K. Universities.

9.7. Although the national student survey (NSS) of final year undergraduates, is likely to be of less importance in future TEF cycles, it remains an important measure of student satisfaction to which we need to give attention. This year, we obtained the second highest score in London for teaching and for overall satisfaction with 90% of students finding our courses intellectually stimulating, the 6th highest in the U.K. Individual subjects scored particularly well on overall satisfaction with Philosophy rated the best in the country by our students, English 3rd in the U.K. and 1st in London with Politics 4th in the U.K. and 1st in London and Media Studies being 2nd in the U.K. and in London.

9.8. Despite these relatively good results we do need to improve our NSS results particularly in the areas we do not do well, notably “assessment and feedback” and “academic support”. The need to understand and improve the experience of our students is reinforced by recent changes to our student body and notably the
presence of much younger students studying our three-year evening degrees and of an increasing number of overseas students.

9.9. For these reasons, I asked Professor Diane Houston to lead a review of the student experience. Membership of the group included a lay Governor (Mr Simon Davis), an Assistant Dean (Head of Department), Professor Sarah Hart, (Economics, Mathematics & Statistics), an Assistant Dean (Learning and Teaching), Dr Anita Walsh), and the Academic Registrar, Fraser Keir.

9.10. Their report and recommendations will form one of the major items of discussion at the SPC and Governors’ Away Days and so will not be discussed in detail here.

9.11. It does conclude however, that “the College adapted very successfully to changing policy and funding environment and is in a strong position overall. However, we need to do more to deliver on our mission and to meet the moral imperative of providing an excellent learning environment for our students”.

Following discussion of the report at SPC and Governors, an implementation group will be set up to produce a detailed implementation plan.

9.12. The report also indicates that we need to do our best to take advantage of changes in the regulatory framework in order to enhance the recruitment and retention of our students. It will be of particular interest to see whether the introduction of maintenance loans for part-time undergraduate students in 2018-2019 will reverse the considerable decline in part-time numbers since increased fees and loans for part-time students were introduced in 2012 and whether this will represent a real increase in such students or a redistribution
from our three-year degrees (which currently attract maintenance loans) to our four-year degrees.

9.13. In addition to our successful lobbying for the introduction of maintenance loans, for part-time students, we have also successfully lobbied for the Higher Education and Research Act to ensure that the Office for Students (OfS) has an obligation to pay due regard to part-time and mature learners. Following this, we were pleased to host a visit by Sir Michael Barber, the Chair of the Office for Students. This was highly successful, particularly his round-table discussion with a number of our Birkbeck students whom he found to be an “inspiring, diverse group, full of enthusiasm for learning”.

9.14. We continue to lobby on a number of issues. These include the need to recognize the market failure in part-time Higher Education and move to a situation in which such students pay lower fees supported by loans with the difference being made up by enhanced support for the Universities which teach part-time students. Similarly, we are lobbying on the need for such students to only begin repaying their loans one year after they have completed their course (as is the case for full-time students). We also continue to argue for a relaxation of the ELQ rules so that students who already have a first degree will be eligible for a loan if they wish to study a second first degree in vocational subjects such as Management or Law as is the case now for those studying STEM subjects and Computer Science.

9.15. Obviously, all these measures have the capacity to impact significantly on future student recruitment. In the meanwhile however, our recruitment of UK students in 2017-2018 marginally increased compared to 2016-2017 from 3,100
FTE to 3,127 FTE. Although this represents a reasonable result in a competitive market, the decline in EU students previously discussed, resulted in an overall decline in student numbers of 3% from 4,315 FTE in 2016 to 4,170 in 2018. This was particularly unfortunate since we had predicted increased student numbers based on high levels of applications up to April 2017 when the 2017-2018 budget was set. This will result in a considerable deficit in 2017-2018 which is clearly unsustainable in future years.

9.16. We therefore need to ensure that we operate as efficiently as possible. We are therefore developing a workload model to ensure that academic and administrative operations across the College operate with increased efficiency and effectiveness. This obviously relates to the issue of academic staff who do not have one appropriate paper to submit to the REF where we need to understand how such staff contribute to our teaching and administrative activities.

9.17. In general however, we can only enhance our position by increasing student recruitment and retention. Encouragingly, applications from home students are currently up by 29% on the same period last year (1863 compared to 1449 last year) compared to an overall sector-wide drop of 5% in UCAS applications. This parallels our increase in overseas non-EU applications discussed earlier. Indeed, such increases compensate for the decline of EU applicants with total applicants up by 38% (2782 to 3843) and home/EU up by 20% (1748 to 2093).

9.18. Nonetheless, we need to do more to maximise recruitment. In this paper, I have already touched on a number of initiatives which should do this. These
include the introduction of maintenance loans for part-time students, increased support for the International Office to build on our effective recruitment of international students and the Student Experience Review which has great potential to contribute to retention.

9.19. We also need to improve our marketing both to individuals and via engagement with businesses. This can involve targeted marketing of particular courses and improving overall awareness of the College and its excellence in both research and teaching (see below). We also need to further analyse entry qualifications, particularly for younger undergraduate students with A-levels and at postgraduate level where we are significantly more selective than for undergraduate qualifications.

9.20. Clearly, however we also need to broaden and develop our portfolio. For the first time in 2017-2018 we offered a full-time four-year degree with Foundation Year for those students whose initial qualifications did not meet the requirement to enter directly onto the three-year full-time degree. This was very successful with 165 enrolments in 2017-2018. Clearly, some of these would in the past have entered a three-year full-time degree but we estimate a net gain of around 50 additional students from the introduction of the degree with Foundation Year. Moreover, those students who might otherwise have entered the three-year degree are likely to be more successful in completing the four-year programme, resulting in improved retention and a better outcome for such students. Currently there are 269 applications for Foundation Year entry in 2018-2019, up 83% on the same period last year.
9.21. The success of this initiative suggests the need to guide students as to the best level of course for them. As well as doing this at undergraduate level with Foundation year, etc. this is also important at postgraduate level where, for example, a two-year MSc may be better for a student who originally applied for the one-year course both pedagogically and in terms of their other commitments.

9.22. As well as introducing new types of programme such as the Foundation year, at School level there has also been further curriculum development. For example, the Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies in the School of Arts, introduced three new MAs in the Digital Media Area. Similarly, the School of Business, Economics and Informatics welcomed the first MBA students ever at Birkbeck on its MBA with Central St Martin’s which emphasizes the combination of technical business skills with creativity and innovation. In addition, the School launched a new Bachelor of Business Administration Degree in Culinary Industry Management jointly with Le Cordon Bleu.

9.23. Evidently, each School needs to consider how it can further develop its programmes in order to enhance student numbers and to widen the benefit available from studying at Birkbeck to students who wish to study in areas where we do not currently teach. This is particularly true for those Departments which experienced decreased student numbers this year.

9.24. Moreover, we need to ensure that the Registry and Schools process applications as swiftly and effectively as possible, so ensuring that offers are made rapidly, increasing the likelihood of their being accepted. To this end we are conducting a cross-College and internally externally informed Admissions and
Enrolment Review focussed on all aspects of the applicant journey, particularly the division of labour between the Registry and the Schools.

9.25. In these ways we can begin to build on our success in TEF and the outcomes of the Student Experience Review to enhance both recruitment and retention at Birkbeck.

10. ACCESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

10.1. During the sabbatical of Dr Roz Dixon, the PVM for Access and Community Engagement, I asked Ms Caroline McDonald, Head of Widening Access and Engagement, External Relations to lead in this area.

10.2. Clearly, a number of aspects of our work discussed in earlier sections of this paper relate closely to the Access and Engagement agenda. These include the Foundation Year which provides access to Birkbeck Degrees for those who are not yet ready to begin a three-year full-time or four-year part-time programme. Similarly, the Compass Project has opened Birkbeck to asylum seekers who however talented would not otherwise be able to afford to study here.

10.3. In the past year we have also received philanthropic grants aimed at improving access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and enhancing their retention. For example, Unum (one of the U.K.’s leading Employee Benefits providers) has supported fifteen bursaries for those whose financial difficulties would otherwise cause barriers to study, including five for students with registered disabilities. Similarly, UPP Foundation has provided £40,000 to support the Birkbeck Student Counselling Outreach Project, which is intended to
reach groups less likely to seek mental health support, such as men, refugees and care leavers. This support will allow such students to understand and overcome their difficulties and hopefully allow them to continue to benefit from study at Birkbeck.

10.4. As well as providing appropriate access courses and financial support, it is also necessary to recognize the geographic barriers to study at Birkbeck in Central London. In 2016-2017, we launched the “Bridges to Birkbeck” project and taught for the first time in Tottenham. This involved students studying Higher Education Introductory Studies (HEIS) in the business area and 13 students successfully graduated from this one-year Course. Five of these have progressed onto degree courses at Malet Street. Students benefited from a £1,500 fee waiver provided by Harringey Council. In 2017-2018 the HEIS Course will be extended to provide a Social Sciences track for those students wishing to study in this area.

10.5. In parallel with the development of our Tottenham provision, we are also revisiting our provision in Stratford where our enrolments have declined while the nature of the area and the competition from other Universities has significantly changed since we first began teaching in Stratford over ten years ago. We have commissioned our original Consultant, SQW, to return to Stratford and conduct a survey of the new conditions/competition so as to make recommendations for the development of our activities in this important area of London. A proposal based on their findings will be presented to the Governors’ Awayday.
10.6. Overall, our activities in the Access and Community Engagement Area resulted in the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) approving our access agreement, thereby allowing us to charge undergraduate fees greater than £6,000 p.a. up to the maximum of £9,250 p.a. Subsequently, Professor Les Ebdon, Director of OFFA visited Birkbeck and met with a number of Birkbeck students. He commented “these students are inspirational in their commitment to building a better future for themselves and their families through the opportunities that Birkbeck offers”.

11. ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION

11.1. Although the Government’s apprenticeship scheme continues to be relatively unpopular with employers, the College has made progress in this area. Under the leadership of the PVM for Enterprise and Innovation Professor Philip Powell, four apprenticeship programmes have been developed with a blend of modules from existing programmes and work-based learning modules. These programmes are Chartered Manager (undergraduate), Digital and Technology Solutions (undergraduate), Laboratory Scientist (foundation) and Senior Leader (postgraduate).

11.2. The College has been successful in its application to join the national Register of Apprenticeship Training as well as being placed on the approved supplier list by London and South East NHS Trusts and seven London boroughs including Camden and Haringey.

11.3. In the careers area, the J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation have provided £0.5 million to support our UpSkill programme. This has 2076 students registered and
delivered ten events last term with 354 students attending whilst Birkbeck Talent (our in-house employment agency) worked on eighty two paid employment opportunities with sixty eight students successfully placed. Similarly, 160 mentors from firms such as PWC, J.P. Morgan, Credit Suisse and the Civil Service have worked with student mentees across the College.

11.4. In the entrepreneurship area, the College has provided support for 185 students via the Enterprise Pathways programme and all 70 places on the Flagship Pioneer programme were filled before the first session in November 2017. Moreover, the College has provided the first “Enterprise in London Guide” for budding entrepreneurs in London.

11.5. Our activities in this area have been generously supported by Santander. Their new three-year grant to the College in addition to scholarships for Latin American students (see above) also includes support for entrepreneurship initiatives in BEI. Similarly, the Santander SME Internship Programme has already supported forty Birkbeck students to do internships in start-ups and small companies, notably improving their employment prospects.

12. ESTATES

12.1. Under the leadership of Jeremy Tanner, Director of Commercial Services and Estates Development, the Estates Department has continued to make progress with each of the major Estates projects approved by Governors last year.

These are all in accordance with the core objectives of the Estates strategy:
• Enabling teaching and learning to be developed 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 quality, fitness for purpose and sustainability of the existing estate.

Progress with each of the major Estates projects will be discussed in turn:

13. 32-33 Torrington Square

13.1. This project aims to provide additional suitable facilities for the highly successful Babylab of the Department of Psychological Sciences. It will provide a freshly built Toddlerlab for the team on the vacant site at 33 Torrington Square, as well as redeveloping the adjacent building at 32 Torrington Square, which was previously occupied by the team and has had to be vacated due to safety issues.

13.2. A project team to manage this project has been set up and meets regularly. It is chaired by me and includes independent Governor Peter Zinkin, representatives of College Management, the Estates Department, the end users from the Department of Psychological Sciences and the Design Team.

13.3. Planning permission for the new building was obtained at the end of 2017, subject only to the signing of the Section 106 Agreement by Camden Council, the College and the University. Terms for the acquisition of 99-year leases on 32 and 33 Torrington Square have been agreed with the University and following the
final signing of the lease, we and the University will sign the Section 106 Agreement with Camden Council.

13.4. In parallel with the application for planning permission, we have gone through a tendering process for the building project. Several tenders have been received which are satisfactory in terms of costs, plan of work, etc. and we have selected a contractor with a start on site in February 2018 and completion in mid-2019.

14. Cambridge House

14.1. Following the purchase of the freehold of Cambridge House on the Euston Road by the College, there was considerable debate as to the best use of this building. Last year, Governors approved the use of the building as a teaching facility which would be suitable not only for general teaching but also for intensive/executive type of courses and for both internal and external conferences.

14.2. A project team for this project has been set up. Again, this is chaired by myself with representatives of the College Management, the Estates Department, and the Planning/Design Team. As well as Peter Zinkin, it also includes the Pro-Vice Master for Education, Professor Diane Houston.

14.3. A scheme has been developed in which the current building would be refurbished with the addition of a skyline two-storey lecture theatre within the consented envelope for planning permission obtained by the previous owners.

14.4. Although our scheme is within the consented envelope for planning permission, this previous permission was for residential property on top of the
existing building. We will therefore have to apply for change of use as well as obtaining planning permission for our detailed design. Thus far, discussions on this scheme with Camden Council planners have been favourable and we have submitted our application for planning permission. In parallel with this external application, we are continuing our discussions with the staff and the Students’ Union as to the best way in which this building can provide a high quality teaching facility, which enhances the Student Experience at Birkbeck.

15. Science Block

15.1. Building of an additional Science Block as an infill extension at the south west corner of our main building has two major advantages. Firstly, it provides new research facilities for our outstanding Department of Biological Sciences. Secondly, it removes the need for laboratory facilities in the extension building adjacent to the main building, thereby facilitating its redevelopment.

15.2. Although this project is not scheduled to begin for some time, discussions with the potential users in the Department of Biological Sciences have already begun and are focussing on their requirements both for facilities in the new building and for the manner in which these would be linked to current laboratories in our main building. In parallel, we maintain our search for a stand-alone offsite location for these laboratories in case this should provide a more cost-effective solution.

16. Malet Street Extension Building
16.1. Following the decant of Biological Sciences Laboratories into the new Science Block, it will be possible to complete the re-development of the extension building.

16.2. Our preferred option for this is, as before, to demolish the building and to rebuild it with a greatly enlarged footprint and additional floors to bring its height to the same level as the main building. This is clearly a very costly project but would provide the College with greatly enhanced facilities and considerable additional space. It would allow us to achieve our aim of all classes taking place in Birkbeck-controlled space.

16.3. However, following a detailed survey carried out in the last year, it appears there is also another option. This would involve a complete refurbishment of the extension building whose structure has been found to be sound, albeit the facilities within it are inadequate and need to be replaced. This would clearly be a much cheaper option than complete rebuilding, although it would provide less space than a complete rebuilding.

16.4. As this project is not scheduled to commence for some time, we will conduct a detailed comparison of the two options in terms of costs, outcomes, etc. It would then be possible to make a decision taking into account the financial position at the time, as well as the contribution of Fundraising to this and other Estates projects.

17. FUNDRAISING
17.1. Under the leadership of Chris Murphy, our Development and Alumni Team has contributed significantly to the long-term sustainability of the College by raising funds from individuals, companies, and charitable trusts and foundations.

17.2. In total £3.4 million was raised in 2016-2017 compared to £1.79 million income secured in 2015-2016. Master’s Circle donors (£1,000 to £5,000 per annum) have increased from 57 to 72 and 1823 Circle donors (£5,000 to £25,000 per annum) from 24 to 35. In addition, 300 volunteers gave over 3,000 hours of voluntary service in areas such as mentoring of students.

17.3. A number of the projects discussed elsewhere in this strategy are supported by philanthropic donations. For example, the Toddlerlab Project is supported by major donations from the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation, the Wolfson Foundation and the Garfield Weston Foundation. We have also just received a donation of £250,000 to the project from Daniel and Elizabeth Peltz. The Compass Project for Asylum Seekers and our work to ensure that all students access mental health support (see above) are both supported by philanthropic donations. Such donations also support a number of different studentship opportunities for students on low incomes or from particular overseas countries.

17.4. As well as our normal fundraising activities, this year has seen the preparation for the case for support of our 200th Anniversary Fundraising Campaign “Birkbeck: No barriers, no limits”. As envisaged in last year’s Strategy document, the case for support falls under two main headings. Firstly, “No barriers: wider access”, where we seek support for undergraduate and postgraduate bursaries, support to complete the course/student experience and career development. Secondly, “No limits: greater excellence”, where we seek
support for the Estates Projects described above, as well as Doctoral Research Scholarships and prestigious future leader, Postdoctoral Fellowships.

17.5. Following the finalisation of the case of support internally, the consultancy More Partnership interviewed thirty three major donors and prospective major donors as part of a feasibility study to obtain their views on the case for support and establish the likelihood of being able to raise £50 million in philanthropic funding towards the College’s priorities. The study found considerable support for Birkbeck and its mission with, according to More, an unprecedented proportion of those asked, being willing to be interviewed. Similarly, those interviewed expressed strong support for the College and its vital, relevant and distinctive role.

17.6. On this basis, More Partnership concluded that Birkbeck was well positioned to implement its first major Fundraising Campaign. Moreover, it was felt that the proposed scope and scale of the Campaign (£50 million), although ambitious, should be achievable for Birkbeck. Obviously, this finding gives us confidence as we seek to raise approximately £20 million towards the Campaign goal, before the public launch-date which is likely to be in 2020. So far the total raised stands at £4.7 million made up of £3.4 million, 2016-2017 (see above) and £1.3 million so far in 2017-2018.

17.7. Two major aspects for further discussion/action emerged in the interviews conducted by More Partnership. Firstly, a number of business representatives were interviewed and their feedback was that the College needed to develop a stronger case for support to business, emphasizing the commercial advantages of engaging with Birkbeck. Illustrating the potential of this, our involvement in
the £43 million Institute of Coding (as above) was initiated at a dinner held to explore areas of collaboration between Birkbeck and Deloitte (who were already involved in the potential bid).

17.8. To develop the area of business collaboration, we need to set up a Corporate Partnership Working Group across the College which would aim to identify, establish and develop relationships with a small number of key partners. The group would be responsible for a Corporate Partnerships menu-type document which would indicate the potential links between Birkbeck and businesses as well as the appropriate person to contact in each area. Overall, this would ensure that our internal structures are such that they effectively facilitate our ability to engage more extensively and more strategically with external corporate partners.

17.9. As well as issues about interaction with business, a number of our supporters who participated in the Feasibility Study felt that Birkbeck was not well understood outside of its immediate academic, alumni and supporter constituencies. Moreover, they felt that there was a significant opportunity through the Campaign to raise the College’s profile, to clarify and make more of its brand and purpose and to communicate the quality of Birkbeck education. This issue of Birkbeck’s public profile is discussed in the next section.

18. BIRKBECK’S PUBLIC PROFILE

18.1. As indicated above, one of the major outcomes of the Fundraising Feasibility Study was the consistent view expressed by our supporters that we
need to raise awareness of Birkbeck’s unique combination of high quality flexible teaching informed by excellent research.

18.2. Indeed, even major donors are often unaware of this unique combination. Thus, for example, in the past a donor who had supported a new building primarily for teaching upon being shown an adjacent research building said “but that is research, Birkbeck does not do research does it?” Similarly, a major donor who had supported scientific laboratories when told of the potential move of the Wiener Library to our campus, said “but Birkbeck does not do History”.

18.3. However, improving public awareness of our unique activity is not simply important for improved fundraising. It evidently relates also to our ongoing political campaigns, although in this area it appears that politicians and civil servants do have a good awareness of Birkbeck and are supportive of our position, even though their policy decisions often have unintended consequences for us.

18.4. Most importantly however, awareness of our high quality flexible teaching is of considerable importance for recruitment and retention of students. A number of years ago, our recruitment depended almost entirely on persuading mature students to come to Birkbeck rather than simply not study at all. This has now changed so that we are in a much more competitive market in a number of areas. For example, our UCAS recruitment of younger students for three-year courses relies on making ourselves known to the more mature 18-year old who wishes to combine work and study for financial or family reasons. Moreover, in the Masters area we are in direct competition with other Colleges of the University of London and other London Universities, particularly in our one-year
full-time equivalent Courses. Similarly, the market for overseas students in a highly competitive one and our continued success in this area relies on our raising awareness of Birkbeck in newer and developing markets overseas.

18.5. Overall therefore, it is clearly necessary to take professional advice as to how to promote Birkbeck as an excellent institution with high quality research informing our unique flexible teaching. This is not a simple task, since potential mature students who have never studied at University may be put off from studying at a University which promotes itself as of the highest quality, since they may not have the confidence to apply to such an institution. Thus, our message of excellence needs to be combined with messages regarding the quality of the student experience and of the intellectual and other support provided to our students.

18.6. One major issue here in promoting Birkbeck, is our position in league tables. In terms of international league tables, we continue to perform well. As indicated above, our position in the THE World University Rankings fell this year but we continue to be in the top one-third of the 1,100 Universities rated in the survey, which constitute the top 5% of Universities worldwide. Similarly, although we suffered a small decline in the QS World University Rankings, our position continues to be much higher that it was several years ago. Moreover, as indicated above, in both surveys we score very highly for our international nature which should be of considerable value in promoting the College to overseas students.

18.7. Similarly, in both tables we have subjects which perform extremely well. For example, Psychology was rated 68th in the world in the THE Survey, whilst in
the QS Survey both English and Philosophy were rated in the top 100 and History, Psychological Sciences and Law were rated in the top 150.

18.8. As well as our appearance in international league tables, the growth of our “full-time” three-year undergraduate cohort has resulted in our being ranked for the first time in domestic league tables. Again, we do reasonably well in certain specific subjects with, for example, the Complete University Guide (CUG) rating our Archaeology as best in London, with creative writing and modern foreign languages second in London and History of Art third in London. However, our overall position in the CUG table is 116th out of 128-multifaculty institutions.

18.9. In considering this situation, we need to distinguish between the different metrics used by leagues tables. Thus, for example, there are metrics which work unfavourably for us but which we cannot change due to the nature of our mission. For example, our entry tariff (A level score) is considerably lower than other comparable institutions in accordance with our open access mission. Similarly, completion rates for our students studying flexibly in the evening and working in the day are obviously lower than those for full-time students studying in the day. If these two metrics are taken out of the calculation our position improves by approximately 20 places.

18.10. In contrast to these mission-related metrics, there are others where we should seek to improve. These include our NSS scores and our spending on academic facilities such as the library and computing. Clearly, these could be improved by more investment although the metric also measures spend on leisure facilities, which is always likely to be lower than for other institutions with day-time students, where these facilities play a central role in student life.
18.11. Interestingly, the table also scores highly those institutions which give a very high proportion, of First and II.1 Degrees. The proportion of such degrees has increased greatly in the sector but Birkbeck has not mirrored this trend, awarding 59% First or II.1 compared to 73% average in the sector. Indeed, when I appeared in front of the House of Lords Economic Affairs Select Committee, the sector was criticised for the grade inflation of Degrees and I was able to state categorically that Birkbeck has not followed this trend. I do not believe therefore that we should compromise our academic standards simply to rise in the league tables.

18.12. Overall therefore, it is likely that by improving some key parameters we could rise perhaps 20 or 25 positions in the league table but the unique nature of our mission is unlikely to allow us to go any higher.

18.13. We therefore need to deal with this issue in both our external and internal messaging and particularly in any rebranding campaign. To do this, we need to continue to emphasize Birkbeck’s unique mission and how blanket measures for the standard full-time Degrees across the sector do not do us justice. Similarly, we need to emphasize situations where we do well such as the international league tables and subject rankings both nationally and internationally.

18.14. Most importantly, we need to emphasize our success in the REF and TEF Government assessments (as opposed to media ones), In the TEF for example, we do particularly well in terms of outcome measures, such as graduate employability and retention (when compared to retention of part-time students across the sector). The TEF assessment focusses on bench marked output
measures as opposed to league tables issued by commercial providers based on relatively crude input metrics.

18.15. Indeed, it may be appropriate to simply withdraw from the National League Tables altogether by refusing to provide the data on which they are based. This would be on the basis that the tables are aimed at eighteen year olds who wish to carry out full-time/day time study and immerse themselves in a specific University lifestyle. They clearly do not measure our life transforming activities effectively or provide an appropriate guide for students of all ages wishing to combine work and study. This could be combined with potentially rebranding our courses as accelerated three-year part-time degrees, paralleling the accelerated two-year degrees in the full-time sector. Such an approach is now feasible given that maintenance loans are now available to part-time students.

18.16. As part of the rebranding exercise, this approach would need to be combined with an extensive political and media campaign explaining the reasons for our decision and potentially branding league tables as redundant now that Government is conducting its own ratings of teaching as well as research. In parallel, we need to ensure that our primary focus is on REF and TEF to maximise our success in these assessments.

18.17. Overall therefore, our approach to league tables needs to be a part of our overall public profile strategy emphasizing our strength in Government assessments of Research (REF) and Teaching ((TEF) and as always indicating how our unique mission renders comparison with the rest of the sector un-meaningful.
19. CONCLUSION

19.1. Although this has been a generally successful year for the College, our student recruitment figures do give cause for concern both in terms of numbers and their impact on our finances. We obviously need to do everything that we can to continue to recruit EU students domiciled in the U.K. taking advantage of positive Government decisions and providing our own reassurances about the ability to continue to study if individuals leave the U.K. However, recognising that this may be very difficult, we need also to maximise our recruitment of U.K. and overseas students, both by improving and focussing our marketing and by offering novel courses, both in terms of access and different speciality subjects.

19.2. Despite the impact on the College’s finances this year, we need to recognise that the College remains in a strong financial position with good reserves and that we should therefore continue with our Estates projects and the Fundraising Campaign for them.

19.3. The 200th Anniversary represents a unique opportunity to ensure that Birkbeck is accessible to all who can benefit from it and that those who study here benefit from high quality teaching facilities and from being taught by outstanding researchers working in appropriate facilities.

Professor David S. Latchman

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