BIRKBECK
University of London

MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC BOARD

16 June 2016

Present:
Professor David Latchman (Chair), Professor Matthew Innes, professor Julian Swann, Professor Stephen Frosh, Professor Sue Jackson, professor Hilary Fraser, Professor Philip Powell, Professor Patricia Tuit, Professor Nick Keep, Professor Miriam Zukas, Dr Stewart Motha, Dr Kate Mackenzie-Davey, Mr Robert Atkinson, Mr Pete Williams, Ms Catherine Lauriol, Dr Laura Jacobus, Dr Fiona Candlin, Dr Ben Fairbairn, Dr Julia Sims, Dr Jennifer Baird, Mr Richard Brinck-Johnsen, Mr Tommy Barnes, Ms Hana Faber, Dr Jan Etienne, Dr Martin Shipway, Professor Sarah Hart, Dr Sarah Lamble, Professor Gerald Roberts, DR Richard Rayne, Dr Belina Brookes-Gordon, Dr Rosie Cox, Professor Hallvard Lillemo, Professor Hilary Downes, Dr Luciana Martins, Dr Elena Loizidou, Dr Serafina Cuomo, Dr Diane Horn

In Attendance:
Mr Keith Harrison, Mrs Katharine Bock, Mr Fraser Keir, Miss Lucy Heming, Mr Kashim Barick

30  MINUTES
Received and confirmed
30.1 The draft minutes of the Academic Board meeting of 3 March 2016 (AB 2015 25)

31  REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Noted
31.1 The Report made to the Governors following the meeting of the Academic Board 3 March 2016 (AB 2015 26)

32  MASTER’S REPORT
Noted
32.1 The Master reported the appointment of a new Executive Dean for the School of SSHP. Professor Matthew Davis who is currently the Pro Dean of the School of Advanced Study, University of London will be joining the College from October.

32.2 The role of Pro Vice Master for Learning and Teaching is being advertised internally and externally and members of the Academic Board were encouraged to put themselves forward for consideration.

32.3 It was reported that Postgraduate student applications were higher than last year and although Undergraduate applications were lower, improvements in the recruitment process had led to increased acceptance offers. It is hoped Undergraduate student numbers would pick up further as large volumes of applications were yet to be received.
33 ACADEMIC BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Received and confirmed
33.1 Members of ABExCo present confirmed the minutes of the Academic Board Executive Committee meeting of 2 June 2016 (AB 2015 27)

34 COLLEGE POLICIES: 1) FREE SPEECH POLICY 2) SAFEGUARDING POLICY 3) STUDENTS WITH CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS POLICY
Noted and Received
34.1 Papers on College Policies (AB 2015 28, AB 2015 29, AB 2015 30)
34.2 Academic Board discussed three policies: Free Speech Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Students with Criminal Convictions Policy. These policies have been through extensive consultation in the College involving Committees, School Executives and Trade Unions. The College had also sought extensive advice from its solicitors who had confirmed that the College has met the minimum level to satisfy Counterterrorism and Security Act compliance requirements.
34.3 Academic Board’s view was that the documents had been significantly edited and improved during the consultation process, but suggested further changes were necessary. Members expressed concerns that the documents were too heavily weighted towards the government’s Counterterrorism and Prevent agenda and should instead have a more independent tone with a greater emphasis on freedom of expression. It was also suggested that the College adopt an approach in line with that of UCL and LSE, institutions with some cultural similarities to Birkbeck.
34.4 Members proposed that the College takes more time to debate and refine the policies as fundamental issues have to be addressed, but members also acknowledged that it is necessary to ensure that the College is compliant with the law.
34.5 Academic Board heard the policies will be taken through an Equality Impact Assessment in their first year of operation and the outcome will be reported to Academic Board and the Equalities Committee.
34.6 Academic Board agreed that the policies would be redrafted taking into account members’ feedback and further advice would be obtained from the College’s solicitors on minimum compliance requirements in relation to references to legislation. It was also agreed that members could propose specific amendments to the Master as Chair of Academic Board, before the Governors’ meeting.
34.7 The policies would be put to Governors on 30 June together with Academic Board feedback.

Secretary’s note:
The Supporting Students with Criminal Convictions policy is not needed for legal compliance and does not require Governors’ approval, and will continue to be developed in the College.
35 RESEARCH COMMITTEE
Received
35.1 The report of the Research Committee (AB 2015 31)

35.2 Academic Board received an update on the ongoing work of the Research Committee. The Committee reported that the work on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) continued, and Birkbeck with the rest of the sector was waiting for Lord Stern’s report on the REF, now expected in the Autumn. Once the report is published, the College will draw up its timetable and prepare its response to the report.

35.3 The postgraduate review conducted by Carol Watts earlier in the year is now in the process of being implemented and progress reports will be presented during the new academic year.

35.4 The Committee also reported that the College has started preparing for the HR Excellence in Research award and aims to submit the application in 2017.

36 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE
Received
36.1 The report of the Student Engagement & Widening Participation Committee (AB 2015 32)

36.2 Academic Board received an update from the Student Engagement & Widening Participation Committee. Members heard that since the last meeting of the Academic Board where Dr Chris Dewberry gave a presentation on research to identify factors associated with student drop out intentions, the Committee has been overseeing three key student engagement projects; query resolution (improving the speed and efficiency of answering questions from prospective and enrolled students), measures to minimise student withdrawals and interruptions, and the development of policy around personal tutors.

37 TEACHING & QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
Received
37.1 The report of the TQEC Committee (AB 2015 33)

37.2 TQEC reported on the transitional arrangements for quality assessment in 2016/17. Members heard that the College would not be undergoing a HE Review in 2016/17 but would be required to make assurances about the quality of its standards and provision through the annual accountability return (AAR) process from the governing body to HEFCE. This would also become a standard part of the quality assessment framework from 2017/18. Birkbeck would be one of the first institutions to go through this process as the College was due for a review next year.

37.3 The Committee reported on the national Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The White Paper and Technical Consultation had been released on 16 May 2016 following the consultation on the green paper.

37.4 Members heard certain chapters were relevant to Birkbeck as they mentioned competition with other institutions and the commitment the government has made
to part-time students. The Paper confirmed that the HE regulatory architecture would consist of an Office for Students (OfS) which will be an amalgamation of HEFCE and OFFA. Institutions were encouraged to respond to the technical consultation next month.

37.5 Academic Board heard institutions that have a successful QA award in 2016/17 (year one) will receive a rating of ‘Meets Expectations’. This will enable the institution to increase fees in line with inflation. Year Two (2017/18) will be a trial year where the full assessment process will be trialled on a voluntary basis following which will be a lessons learned exercise. As yet the College has not decided whether it will take part in the year two trial assessment.

37.6 There will be 3 award bandings with the baseline quality threshold being ‘Meets Expectations’. The middle rating will be ‘Excellent’ and the top band will be ‘Outstanding’. Financial incentive will not be differentiated according to the level of award and all institutions that achieve the baseline rating will be allowed to uplift fees in line with inflation.

37.7 Year three will be the first full year of assessment at provider level and additional metrics will be introduced at this time. Year four will be the first year in which disciplinary level assessments take place and, PG taught courses could possibly be included at this time. There are no plans to extend TEF to PG Research.

37.8 Academic Board approved recommendations for the following new, amended, withdrawn and suspended:

**New Programmes**
- BA Creative Writing (full-time)
- MSc Mathematics and Financial Modelling
- Cert HE Introduction to Politics
- Cert HE Introduction to Geography
- BA Linguistics and Language (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish) – addition of Italian
- PG Cert in Business Innovation
- PG Cert Creative Industries

**Programme Amendments:**
- BA Language programmes to include Italian and phase out Portuguese
- BA Language and/with International Law
- BA Creative Writing (part-time)
- BA History of Art and History Programme
- BSc Psychology
- BA Psychosocial Studies

The following FT programmes were amended to include ‘with International Experience’ as they will include a year of study abroad via the Erasmus+ scheme:
- BA French Studies
- BA German
- BA Language and/with English (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish)
• BA Language and/with Film-Media (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish)
• BA Language and/with Global Politics (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish)
• BA Language and/with History (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish)
• BA Language and/with International Law (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish)
• BA Language and/with Journalism (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish)
• BA Language and/with Management (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish)
• BA Language and/with Politics (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish)
• BA Modern Languages
• BA Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies

Withdrawn Programmes:
• MSc Applied Statistics and Stochastic Modelling
• MSc Public Administration
• MA Romantic Studies

Suspended Programmes:
• MA Creative Producing
• MSc Comparative Capitalism
• Grad Dip Finance
• Cert HE Literature

Approved by chair’s action
• MSc Data Science
• MSc Global Environmental Politics and Policy
• MSc Geography
• BA Criminal Law, Policy and Practice

Appendix C: Common Awards Scheme 2016/17
37.9 It was reported that the College would not be making substantive recommended changes to the Common Award Scheme for 2016/17 as in previous years but instead the changes would largely be editorial. Academic Board approved the Common Award Scheme for 2016/17 subject to the resolution of issues around credit sizes.

Appendix D: New Collaborative MBA Programme
37.10 A new joint MBA programme is being developed by Birkbeck and Central Saint Martins, which is part of the University of the Arts London (UAL). Academic Board approved the joint MBA programme.

Appendices E (Mitigating Circumstances), F (Late Submission of Coursework) & G (Personal Examination Arrangements)
37.11 Academic Board heard that these policies were looked at as a suit as part of the College’s consultation process earlier this year. A number of issues such as the relationship between the policies and inconsistencies with dates have now been address. Academic Board approved all three policies.

**Appendix H: Assessment Offenses Policy and Procedure**

37.12 The assessment offences policy has been revised to bring it in line with departmental and sector practices and to streamline the procedures of dealing with offences at appropriate stages. Academic Board approved the Assessment Offenses Policy and Procedure subject to further minor amendments.

**Appendix I: Student Complaints Policy and Procedure**

37.13 The new Student Complaints Policy and Procedure which replaced the Student Dispute Resolution Policy and Procedure was approved by Academic Board in autumn 2015 and implemented in January 2016. Following feedback and advice from Stakeholders and the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA), two changes were proposed to the policy. Academic Board approved the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure.

**Appendix J: Student Attendance Framework for 2016/17**

37.14 The Student Attendance Framework was approved as a pilot for 2015/16. Academic Board were asked to renew the framework for a further year for 2016/17 to allow a thorough analysis of the operation and impact of the Framework based on a full year of data. Academic Board approved the Student Attendance Framework for 2016/17.

**Appendix K: The Marking and Moderation Policy**

37.15 This policy defines the College procedures on the marking and moderation of all work that is formally assessed as part of a College award. Academic Board approved the Marking and Moderation Policy.

38 **INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY**

Received

38.1 The report on the Internationalisation Strategy *(AB 2015 35)*

38.2 Academic Board received a report on the College’s Internationalisation Strategy 2016-2021. The Strategy is the result of a process of consultation involving representatives of the Schools, the International Office, the Registry and Birkbeck’s academic management. The Strategy is directed both at EU and non-EU international environments.

39 **HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY MEMBERSHIP FEES**

Received

39.1 A report on the Higher Education Academy Membership Fees *(AB 2015 36)*

39.2 Academic Board received a report on the Higher Education Academy Membership Fees. It was reported that the proportion of the College’s teaching staff with Academic Teaching Qualifications (ATQs) is likely to become part of an external measure of the College’s teaching excellence.
39.3 Members heard that an improvement in metric outcome would enable the College to demonstrate improved performance against this aspect of excellence. Improving the proportion of the College’s teaching staff with ATQs will improve its TEF judgement, which would increase the College’s reputation and student recruitment.

39.4 HEFCE, through the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), have requested data on academic teaching qualifications (ATQ) records for staff at universities on a ‘teaching’ or ‘teaching and research’ contract since 2012-13. The implied HEFCE threshold has been established at 60% for all teaching staff, by FTE, to hold an ATQ. Currently the College does not meet this threshold.

40 VISITING PROFESSOR APPOINTMENTS
Received and Noted
40.1 Members noted the extension of visiting Professor Dr Carlo Milana to 1st September 2017 (AB 2015 37)

41 CHAIR’S ACTIONS
Received and approved
41.1 A report on the action taken by the Chair on behalf of the Board since the last meeting. (AB 2015 38)

41.2 The Master approved all suspensions of regulations as listed in the paper AB 2015 38.

42 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS
Noted
42.1 The dates for meetings of the Academic Board in year 2016-17:
   • 14 November 2016, at 2pm
   • 9 March 2017, at 2pm
   • 22 June 2017, at 2pm