BIRKBECK
University of London

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of 10 May 2016

Present
Fraser Keir (Chair), Elizabeth Charles, Hugh Kilmister, Luisa Staley (for Chris Murphy), Caroline McDonald, Mara Arts, Garmon ap Garth, Nigel Buckle, Justin Lynas, Martin Shipway, Mosh Aboobaker, Roz Dixon, Jane Nicklin, Richard Brinck-Johnsen, Jeremy Tanner, Katharine Bock, Roisin Lynch, Mark Pimm, John Lindner, Chris Dewberry

22 MINUTES AND REPORT
Noted
22.1 The Report to Academic Board (SEWPC 2015 11)

Confirmed
22.2 The minutes of the meeting of 17 February 2016.

22.3 The amended minutes of the meeting of 1 October 2015.

23 ACTIONS
Noted
23.1 Progress on actions agreed at previous meetings (SEWPC 2015 13)

SU membership of projects
23.2 This action is deferred until the completion of the strategic review of the Students’ Union that is currently underway. The SU representative noted that they are keen to maintain their current level of engagement with this and other Committees.

23.3 This was Richard Brinck-Johnsen’s last meeting as SU representative. The Committee noted their appreciation of his contributions.

Alumni fund
23.4 As requested at the last meeting the guidelines for the Alumni Fund have been circulated. The main differences this year are a longer time frame; an increased emphasis on the criteria in the covering letter; and the inclusion of an academic staff representative and a student representative on the panel. The criteria have not been changed. The Committee noted that the Fund has up to £35K in total to award, and that the maximum award will be £5K.
Members were asked to talk to their colleagues and encourage them to apply to the Fund. Applications should have a focus on what was intended to be achieved, and projects should have as wide a prospective audience as possible.

**Student engagement strategy**

**Action**

23.6 *(All SEWPC members)* Cascade the discussions and decisions of the Committee to colleagues across the College and report back to the Committee. The Registry is also developing a consultation framework to ensure effective cross-institution communication.

**Widening participation framework**

23.7 The PVM Access and Community Partnerships and the Head of Widening Access and Retention will meet with the College Secretary, the Deputy Secretary (Governance) and the Vice Master to discuss the implementation of the framework more broadly across the College and how it can be used to measure participation. The Committee heard that the Widening Participation team will have an intern who will be working on the framework. Members noted that finalising the criteria for inclusion in the “Widening Participation” category is an important part of the work.

23.8 Birkbeck has a relatively high number of students who are care leavers for an institution of its size. These students range in age from 18-50.

**Action**

23.9 *(CMcD)* Consider how to ensure that the College’s various application routes ask for consistent information; currently only UCAS students are asked about their care background on application.

23.10 Members discussed the potential uses for this information, and noted that younger care leavers may, for example, have different support needs. Consideration is also being given to the potential for a project to encourage care leavers to apply to the College.

**Action**

23.11 *(CMcD)* Bring a report on widening participation and care leavers back to a future meeting of SEWPC.

23.12 It was confirmed that the importance of widening participation to the mission and strategic direction of the College is a key focus of the 200th anniversary work.

**My Birkbeck**

23.13 A plan is in place to co-ordinate information and ensure consistency in the implementation of the My Birkbeck project.
Review of induction
23.14 The induction programme is coming together. The Head of Student Engagement has met with the Library, and there is also a Library representative on the group that are working on the programme. There has also been discussion of the programme with the Students’ Union.

Action sheet
23.15 The Committee noted that next year the action sheet for the Committee would begin to include expected dates of completion for outstanding actions.

24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES
Noted
24.1 Minute 13.4: The Committee emphasised the importance of working with the Students’ Union. The Union and the College are currently considering the results of a recent NUS diagnostic visit.

24.2 Minute 13.8: Further consideration would be given to how the student voice could be drawn out in the context of the current review of equalities in the College, for example through focus groups.

25 CHAIR’S REPORT
Noted
25.1 The Committee noted that the College is operating in a challenging environment both internally and externally, in which student engagement work continues to be of the utmost importance.

25.2 The most recent National Student Survey has now closed, having achieved the highest response rate that the College has ever had.

Action
25.3 (SEWPC members) Promote the videos created as part of the ‘you said, we did’ response to the results of the last survey widely, and report any feedback on the campaign to the Committee.

25.4 Members noted that there is expected to be a consultation on the potential for linking HESA’s Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey with HMRC data to provide a picture of graduate employment level.

26 PREDICTORS OF STUDENT SUCCESS
Noted
26.1 The Committee heard a presentation from Dr Chris Dewberry on his research project which aims to identify factors associated with drop-out intentions among
students at Birkbeck. This project began as part of the Catalyst-funded work on retention.

26.2 Dr Dewberry's research has indicated some factors that seem to be associated with intention to drop out, including whether students feel that they are on the right course, and whether they feel they have support from family in their studies at Birkbeck.

26.3 Members noted the need to consider the pre-entry journey in the context of the whole student experience, as the point at which the College can make efforts to ensure that students have sufficient advice and guidance to make the right course choice, and address family support. There are potential interventions that can be made at this stage, including increasing family involvement at open evenings.

**Actions**

26.4 (GaG) Include consideration of potential interventions taking this research into account in External Relations' current review of open evening provision.

26.5 (Recruitment Strategy group) Consider the advice provided to students to ensure they choose the right course for them.

26.6 Members noted a new Tableau report on retention. The College's retention and completion rates are of significant importance to the work of the SEWP Committee, as one indicator of successful student engagement.

**Action**

26.7 (ADs Recruitment and Retention, and members from Student Services and the Students' Union) Bring specific examples of practical interventions to support student retention that are already happening to the next meeting of the Committee in order to share good practice. These examples should be broken down by student year and include work that is being done to retain international students.

26.8 Dr Dewberry will be invited back to a future meeting of SEWPC when more results are available from future versions of the survey.

27 **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT PROJECT REPORTS**

**Received**

27.1 A report from the Strategic Projects Manager on the ongoing student engagement projects *(SEWPC 2015 13)*

**Noted**
27.2 Query resolution, personal tutors, and withdrawals and interruptions are the three projects that currently have project management resource allocated to them. A new Project Coordinator post has been approved and further projects will have PM resource allocated to them when an appointment has been made.

27.3 The Committee is taking a project board approach, receiving progress reports at each meeting. It will receive timelines and review targets for progress against them, and will recommend the closure of projects that are not making progress if appropriate.

27.4 Members are asked to send any comments on the project reports to the Academic Registrar and the Strategic Projects Manager.

28 LECTURE CAPTURE
Received
28.1 An update on lecture capture that has also been discussed at the March meeting of SPC (SEWPC 2015 14)

Noted
28.2 The data suggests that students are not using lecture recordings instead of attending face to face teaching, but are attending lectures and then watching them again afterwards.

28.3 Members noted that use of the system varies by department. It was felt that some academic areas are less suited to lecture capture than others. Some departments also have a lot of their teaching in rooms not owned by Birkbeck, which do not have the necessary equipment. Actions have been identified to support increased future use, including individual contact with heads of the relevant departments, proposing that student orientation material and introductory lectures be available on video, and presentations at departmental meetings aimed at recruiting additional users.

29 ACCESS AGREEMENT
Received
29.1 The College’s Access Agreement for 2017-18 (SEWPC 2015 15)

Noted
29.2 The Access Agreement had been submitted to OFFA. The agreement outlines several initiatives to improve student success at Birkbeck, including the review of introductory routes into Birkbeck, the research project to help identify reasons for withdrawal, the roll out of Birkbeck Talent, the importance of learning and teaching in student success, and the resource invested in the Wellbeing services.
29.3 Members heard that the introduction of part time maintenance loans is an opportunity for the College to review how it can best use the resource it has to support student success in the future. It currently offers a more generous eligibility for financial support to part time students as they cannot currently claim maintenance loans. Once these are introduced the College will also be able to consider how to facilitate students to flexibly move between full and part time modes of study depending on their personal circumstances.