BIRKBECK
University of London

Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee

7 July 2016

Present
David Latchman (Chair), Keith Harrison, Katharine Bock, Megan Reeves, Matthew Innes, John Kempton, Sue Jackson, Tim Markham, Patricia Tuit, Nick Keep, Philip Powell, Nick Head, Jonathan Woodhead, Hilary Fraser, Keith Willett, Miriam Zukas, Julian Swann, Stephen Frosh, Roz Dixon

In attendance
Roisin Lynch

Apologies
Chris Murphy, Jonah Duffin

98 MINUTES
Approved

8.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 6 June 2016.

99 ACTIONS
Noted

99.1 Progress on actions agreed at previous meetings (SP 2015 71)

Postgraduate loans

99.2 A meeting has been arranged with the CEO of the Student Loans Company to discuss issues around postgraduate loans.

100 MATTERS ARISING
Noted

100.1 Members noted that the data behind the financial outturn for 2015-16 has been circulated to SPC by email. Governors were pleased that the forecasts indicated that the surplus would exceed the budget but were concerned that once again our strong financial performance had not been identified earlier in the year. They worried that this challenge of accurately predicting the outturn could result in adverse budget variances in the future. SPC noted that we need to have more in-year control in order to ensure that we do not make unnecessary budget cuts or restrict investment in new initiatives. It was proposed that we review the final outturn at a future meeting with a view to using the data to inform future budget setting and forecasting.
101 MASTER’S REPORT
Noted
101.1 The post of PVM Learning and Teaching has been advertised, and shortlisted candidates will be invited to give a presentation and attend a panel interview on 18 July. It was agreed that members of SPC not on the panel, along with the ADs for Learning and Teaching and the Deputy Director for Learning Development, should be given the opportunity to attend an informal round table with the shortlisted candidates and give feedback to the panel. The Executive Dean of SSHP will chair this meeting.

102 STUDENT RECRUITMENT
Received
102.1 An update on student recruitment (SP 2015 72)

Noted
102.2 At the last meeting SPC had agreed that a paper outlining recruitment targets and plans for academic portfolio development should be presented to F&GPC as assurance that the College is taking steps to ensure its future sustainability. Members noted this paper alongside the item on student recruitment.

102.3 PGT applications and offers are at a four-year high, and UG offers and firm acceptances remain steady. Recruitment appears to be heading in the right direction to meet the College’s modest recruitment targets; however SPC heard that the significant degree of uncertainty in the sector, due to among other things increasing competition, Brexit and its potential economic ramifications, and the introduction of postgraduate loans, means that Birkbeck needs to take a cautious approach and continue to maximise recruitment in the critical summer phase of the recruitment cycle.

102.4 It has been identified that the College will need to make at least 325 offers in Clearing and 325 offers post-Clearing in order to meet recruitment targets. The College will open its phone lines at 7.30am during Clearing and be ready to make offers from this point. Consideration will need to be given in advance to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to enable the right staff, including senior management, to be in attendance.

102.5 Members noted the need to continue with recruitment efforts for postgraduate taught courses. Although some areas had already recruited over their targets it is important that recruitment is maximised to offset other areas that may not manage to do so. SPC members were therefore asked to encourage colleagues to continue to work to make offers and convert them into applications.
This year, for the first time, postgraduate loans are available from the UK government. In the wake of the EU referendum the Minister for Universities and Science has confirmed that funding support for EU students will remain unchanged for existing students and for those starting their course in 2016-17, for the duration of the course. Birkbeck needs to continue to emphasise that this support is available, but that it is not guaranteed that it will be for EU students who start later than 2016-17. Members noted that the introduction of later starts for Masters students might allow the College to continue to recruit postgraduate taught students who are eligible for loans after the beginning of the 2016-17 academic year.

**Action**

**102.7 (FK)** Confirm if EU Masters students will be eligible for loans if they begin in January or April 2017.

**103 EU REFERENDUM**

**Received**

**103.1** A note on the impact of the EU referendum on the future strategy of the College (SP 2015 73) that has also been discussed by the College Governors at their June meeting.

**Noted**

**103.1** Members noted that there had been good feedback from the Birkbeck community about the communications that have so far been sent out by the College. As discussed at the extraordinary meeting of SPC and other key colleagues that had been held immediately after the referendum, the key message that the College is conveying is that Birkbeck is, and will continue to be, an open academic community drawing students and staff from the UK, the EU and beyond and that we value and appreciate the contribution that all make to our success. The College will continue to communicate this.

**103.2** Even if the process of Brexit is not initiated immediately the uncertainty about the future of the UK’s relationship with Europe is likely to have an immediate impact on research, including the withdrawal of EU partners from potential collaborations. The PVM Research is drafting an email to colleagues on the potential impact of Brexit on research. As more information becomes available on the expected impact of the result on other collaborations such as the Erasmus plus programme this will be shared.

**103.3** Members discussed the risks and opportunities presented by the referendum result. It was noted that the changing legal, business and political landscape between the UK, Europe and internationally may offer opportunities for new and expanded courses. Proposed portfolio developments in these areas could be processed
through the fast track procedures that are already in place, rather than waiting for the annual portfolio review process.

103.4 Consideration should be given to a regular bulletin to colleagues to update them as more information about the impact of the referendum becomes available. Universities UK has a regularly updated Brexit FAQ page for universities and it might be useful to make colleagues aware of this.

**Action**

103.5 *(Julia Day)* Put together an EU Referendum college-level communications strategy, including specific areas such as research, and consideration of how the College should use social media.

104 **TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2**

104.1 A paper on participation in TEF2 *(SP 2015 74)*

*Noted*

104.2 All providers with an existing successful QA assessment will meet the baseline requirement for TEF1 and will be allowed to raise undergraduate fees by the retail price index excluding mortgage interest payments in 2017-18. Birkbeck has met this requirement due to its successful audit in 2010 and has resubmitted its Access Agreement with fee increases in line with this announcement.

104.3 TEF 2 will be based on metrics, averaged from the latest three years of data, and a five page institutional submission. Inclusion is voluntary, but will guarantee at least a “Meets Expectations” outcome, which will allow the College to increase fees again in 2018-19. The rating obtained in TEF 2 lasts for up to three years, but institutions can re-submit in this period if they wish.

104.4 There are two significant elements in the construction of the TEF 2 metrics which will disadvantage Birkbeck: including graduates who are not available to work, such as pensioners and full time carers, in the calculation of proportion of students in employment or further study; and not giving consideration of the “London effect” whereby London universities tend to get lower scores in the NSS. Birkbeck will make these disadvantages clear in the response to the TEF technical consultation and in lobbying work. The College is encouraging staff to apply to sit on the TEF assessment panels in order to have further input into the process as the framework is developed.

104.5 It was felt that participation in the TEF 2 process would be manageable for the College in terms of resource, and there was little to be gained by choosing not to participate.
Agreed
104.5 That Birkbeck should take part in the TEF 2 process.

105 BUSINESS WORLD @ BIRKBECK
Received
105.1 An update on the HR/Payroll and Finance Systems Replacement Project (SP 2015 75)
Noted
105.2 Members noted that it might be more effective to engage with academic staff about the project through dedicated meetings rather than through attending School Executive meetings; it was confirmed that the project team would communicate with School staff in whatever way Schools felt would be most appropriate.

106 ATHENA SWAN
Received
106.1 A report on the revised Athena SWAN Charter (SP 2015 76)
Noted
106.2 The Athena SWAN Charter has been revised to extend the framework to include arts, humanities, social science, business and law departments, to require more explicit consideration of professional and support staff, and to include Trans staff and students. This revised Charter will come into effect from April 2017. The College will submit its institutional renewal application in November 2016 under the previous framework, that only includes science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) departments and academic staff.
106.3 It was proposed that Schools consider appointing a lead role such as AD equalities to ensure that Athena SWAN and equality and diversity work is given the necessary priority. SPC agreed that, in order to ensure integration of equality work across the College, decisions about the structure and governance of equality and diversity work in the College should be made after the Strategic Equality Review Group (SERG) had developed proposed objectives. An appropriate institutional infrastructure could then be developed, which could include Assistant Deans for Equalities if the Schools felt this was appropriate.
106.4 Recommendations from SERG would need to be made by October in order to enable the institutional renewal application to be submitted in November 2016.
106.5 SPC noted that participation in Athena SWAN and other equality initiatives are important for the REF, and encouraged as many departments to make submissions as possible. More departments would be able to do so under the new framework, and a
timetable for STEMM departments to submit under the current framework had been developed. The ED for BEI noted that two of the School’s departments would prefer to change their scheduled submission date, and this would be organised outside the meeting.

107 RETIREMENT OF SPC MEMBERS

107.1 SPC noted that Professor Sue Jackson will be retiring in September, and Professor Miriam Zukas will be stepping down from her role as Executive Dean of the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy. The September meeting will be their last official meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee.

107.2 The Committee thanked Professor Jackson and Professor Zukas for their service to the Committee and the College and noted that the Governors have approved the award of Fellowships of the College to both of them.

108 DATES OF MEETINGS 2016-17

Noted

108.1 The dates of meetings for 2016-17:
- 21 September 2016 at 2pm
- 17 October 2016 at 2pm
- 15 November 2016 at 2pm
- 14 December 2016 at 2pm
- 17 January 2017 Awayday
- 16 February 2017 at 2pm
- 28 March 2017 at 2pm
- 9 May 2017 at 2pm
- 7 June 2017 at 2pm
- 5 July 2017 at 2pm