BIRKBECK COLLEGE
University of London

MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2 June 2016

Present
Professor David Latchman (Chair), Professor Philip Powell, Professor Sue Jackson, Dr Joanne Leal, Professor Stephen Frosh, Professor Miriam Zukas, Professor Nicholas Keep, Professor Patricia Tuit, Professor Julian Swann,

In attendance
Mr Richard Evemy, Mr John Kempton, Dr Tim Markham, Ms Megan Reeves, Mr Kashim Barick, Ms Rachael Boyle, Dr Sarah Lee, Mrs Katharine Bock, Mr Keith Harrison

Apologies
Professor Matthew Innes, Mr Robert Atkinson, Dr Jasbir Gill, Professor Sasha Roseneil, Professor Hilary Fraser, Mr Fraser Keir

19 MINUTES AND REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Received and noted
19.1 The confirmed minutes of the Academic Board Executive Committee 18 February 2016 (X 2015 17)

19.2 The Academic Board’s report to the Governors 15 March 2016 (X 2015 18)

19.3 The draft minutes of the Academic Board 3 March 2016 (X 2015 19)

20 MASTER’S REPORT
Noted
20.1 Members heard that an appointment has been made to the position of Executive Dean for the School of SSHP: Professor Matthew Davies, currently a Pro-Dean of the School of Advanced Study, will be joining the College in September 2016. The advert for the position of Pro Vice Master Learning and Teaching will be published in the next few days.

20.2 The College continues to collaborate with the Open University on lobbying in order to ensure that the unique contexts of learning and teaching taking place in part-time and flexible learning institutions are reflected in the TEF.

21 POLICY DEVELOPMENT
Received and considered
21.1 The draft policy Annexes of the TQEC report (X 2015 14):
- Annex A: Safeguarding Policy
- Annex B: Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech
- Annex C: Supporting Students with Criminal Convictions
21.2 Members were informed that the versions of the policies circulated to ABExCo are those that went to the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee on 19 May 2016. Some amendments have been made to the policies since then following consultation in College committees and with the College’s lawyers and affiliated Unions.

**Freedom of Speech Policy**

21.3 The College’s Freedom of Speech policy will address freedom of speech within the law, and the duty to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. The policy is not intended to address the public and academic discourse on the subject.

21.4 Members were assured that the policy had been designed to be compliant with the Education Act 1988 and the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, and would not go further than this.

21.5 It was noted that provision had been made in the policy to enhance the involvement of academics in its implementation. In the event of a potentially contentious event being scheduled to take place on the premises a panel of academics chaired by the Vice Master will have the final say on whether the event will be allowed to take place or not.

21.6 It was confirmed that the policy will be considered at the next meeting of the Equalities Committee on the 14 June 2016.

**Safeguarding Policy**

21.7 Members were informed that feedback on this policy from UCU is still awaited.

**Supporting Students with Criminal Convictions Policy**

21.8 Members were informed that whilst the draft policy had been endorsed at TQEC discussions were still ongoing. It is likely that this policy will undergo another round of consultation before final approval.

21.9 It was agreed that moving forward the College will monitor the official usage of these policies.

**Agreed**

21.10 To review a final draft of the three policies, including summary sheets of the history of changes made and not made and the reasoning behind these decisions, before the Academic Board on 16 June 2016.

*Secretary’s Note: the policies and account of feedback and changes were circulated as agreed. Comments received have been incorporated into the documents that have been circulated to Academic Board*

22 **RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

Received

22.1 The report of the Research Committee *(X 2015 20)*

Noted
22.2 The Research Committee continues to monitor the research centres and institutes of the College. The Committee is impressed with the works of many of the centres and is currently considering ways in which they can be further supported.

22.3 Representatives from several research centres have expressed the need to improve cross-centre communication. The Research Support Group will be looking at ways to facilitate this need.

22.4 Members heard that the London Knowledge Lab, a collaborative partnership between Birkbeck and the IoE since 2001 has been ended. As the decision was initiated by UCL, it was agreed by Chair’s action to approve the launch of a separate Birkbeck University of London Knowledge Lab.

22.5 Incorporating the comments of the REF Working Party the PVM-R has written a response to the Stern Review on behalf of the College.

22.6 It was agreed that following the meeting of the REF Working Party on the 8 June 2016 the PVM-R will send out an all staff email informing people of the current REF situation.

22.7 The Chair of the Open Access Working Group, the PVM-R and the Head of Research Strategy Support continue to meet with Schools and departments in order to disseminate information about the HEFCE Open Access policy and compliance.

23 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

23.1 The report of the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee (X 2015 21) Noted

23.2 Members heard that the College has received its highest ever response rate for the most recent National Student Survey at 67%. This builds on an increase in participation seen last year. The response rate is also markedly up since two years ago, when 53.37 per cent of the college’s eligible students took part.

23.3 SEWP 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.

23.4 The research consists of a year-on-year survey administered to students questioning them on a number of factors in order to determine which indicators might be associated with intention to drop out.

23.5 So far some such indicators have been highlighted, 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.
23.6 The Committee received reports on three student engagement projects that currently have project management resource allocated to them: query resolution, personal tutors, and withdrawals and interruptions.

23.7 The query resolution project ran a workshop in the summer term for Birkbeck staff relating to student queries and how they are resolved by the College.

23.8 The Director of Process Improvement and Corporate Information Systems is working towards a technical solution that will systemise student queries, allowing all members of staff to keep track of the resolution process.

23.9 The Personal Tutor policy 2012 is currently being redrafted following critical appraisal of the document by academic staff.

23.10 The personal tutor working group is also working towards creating a signposting pack for students which will explain to them what a personal tutor is, show them where they can access other relevant services, and School specific information.

23.11 Members heard that a new Project Coordinator post has been approved and further projects will have PM resource allocated to them when an appointment has been made.

23.12 The Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee received a report on lecture capture usage. Members heard that 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.

**Action**

23.13 The Strategic Project Manager will provide a report on how often the ‘you said, we did’ materials have been accessed.

24 **TEACHING AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE**

**Received**

24.1 The report of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (X 2015 22)

**Agreed**

24.2 To recommend that the Academic Board approve the introduction, amendment, suspension and withdrawal of the following programmes:

Programme Approval:
- 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
- MSc Data Science
• MSc Global Environmental Politics and Policy
• MSc Geography
• BA Criminal Law, Policy and Practice

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

Programme Withdrawal:
• MSc Applied Statistics and Stochastic Modelling
• MSc Public Administration
• MA Romantic Studies

Programme Suspension:
• MA Creative Producing
• MSc Comparative Capitalism
• Grad Dip Finance
• Cert HE Literature

Considered

24.3 The Appendices of the TQEC report:
• Appendix A: Quality Assessment Transitional Arrangements Summary
Noted

Appendix A: Quality Assessment Transitional Arrangements Summary

24.4 The College was previously due to be assessed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) under their Higher Education Review (HER) process in 2016/17.

24.5 Following the announcement of the Higher Education Funding Council for England’s (HEFCE) review of quality assessment, the College was advised that instead of a HER, it would be required to undertake a new approach to quality assessment during 2016/17 as part of the transitional arrangements.

24.6 In addition to the transitional arrangements, HEFCE will be piloting other aspects of the quality assessment model in 2016/17. The College must now decide whether or not to volunteer to take part in the 2016/17 pilot. Members heard that the TEF QA Working Group advises that the College should take part in the pilot.

24.7 The College’s involvement in the 2016/17 pilot will allow Birkbeck to provide direct feedback into the process, for example, by highlighting the need for a contextual narrative to accompany metrics.

Action

24.8 The PVM-L&T and the Assistant PVM-L&T will provide a detailed tabulation of the pros and cons of taking part in the 2016/17 pilot at the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Action

24.9 The Policy Advisor will report back on which other institutions will be taking part in the pilot, and will provide clarification on how the data generated by the pilot will be used.

Appendix B: TEF Summary

24.10 The long awaited White Paper, Success as a knowledge economy: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice, was published on May 16 2016 following the consultation on the Green Paper, Fulfilling our potential: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice.

24.11 In Year One (2016/17) all providers with any form of successful QA award will receive a rating of Meets Expectations. Part-time courses will also be incorporated
from Year One as a result of the responses to the consultation. Successful providers can increase fees in line with inflation. Year 1 awards will last for 1 year.

24.12 Year Two (2017/18) will be a trial year. There will be three different TEF ratings – Meets Expectations, Excellent and Outstanding. Financial incentive will not be differentiated according to the level of the award, with all providers who achieve at least a Meets Expectations rating receiving the full inflationary uplift.

24.13 Core metrics for year 2 will be:
- Student satisfaction using the teaching on course, assessment and feedback and academic support scales from the National Student Survey;
- Retention using HESA UK Performance Indicators;
- Proportion in employment in further study using 6 month Destination of Leavers of Higher Education. The department for Business, Innovation and Skills are consulting on a high skilled employment metric in the Technical Consultation.

24.14 Year 2 awards will last for a maximum of 3 years.

24.15 Year Three (2018/19) will, subject to the results of the lessons-learned exercise, be the first full year of assessment at provider level.

24.16 Providers with a rating of 'Meets Expectations' can uplift fees by 50% of rate of inflation; those with Excellent or Outstanding can uplift fees by 100% of rate of inflation. There will be a fees cap per provider, not per cohort.

24.17 During Year Three there will also be a number of pilot assessments at disciplinary level. These will have no financial consequences and will be purely for development purposes.

24.18 Year Four (2019/20) will, subject to the results of the disciplinary pilots, be the first year in which disciplinary level assessments take place. This year is the earliest that there is an intention to also include PGT courses. There are no plans to extend TEF to PGR.

Appendix C: Common Award Scheme 2016/17

24.19 TQEC proposed a number of amendments and clarifications to the Common Award Scheme 2016/17. Members sought clarification on some minor points including confirmation that anything below 60 credits would not be considered a dissertation at postgraduate level.

24.20 Members queried the removal of regulation 43.5 - ‘The final degree classification agreed through the assessment process is based on academic judgement and the above calculation (regulation 43.3(iv) is only used as a guide).’

Secretary’s note; the removal of regulation 43.5 was approved in 2014/15 for the 2015/16 regulations: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/committees/committee-papers/active-committees-and-working-groups/academic-board/academic-board-papers/17-june-2014/AB%202014%2026%20Report%20of%20the%20Teaching%20and%20Quality%20Enhancement%20Committee.pdf](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/committees/committee-papers/active-committees-and-working-groups/academic-board/academic-board-papers/17-june-2014/AB%202014%2026%20Report%20of%20the%20Teaching%20and%20Quality%20Enhancement%20Committee.pdf)
24.21 Members queried the need for amanuensis to accompany students when they leave the exam room.

Secretary’s note: When an exam with an amanuensis takes place, the amanuensis also has the role of invigilator, and accompanies the student in their invigilator role.

**Endorsed**

24.22 ABExCo endorsed the amendments made to the Common Award Scheme 2016/17 and recommend that Academic Board approve the revised policy.

**Appendix D: Alternative Regulations for MBA (Joint Degree)**

24.23 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).

24.24 The proposed collaboration has been given the green-light for development by the Birkbeck Collaborative Approval Panel and the UAL Validations Sub-Committee. There is an ongoing programme validation process.

**Endorsed**

24.25 ABExCo endorsed the Alternative Regulations for MBA (Joint Degree) and recommend that Academic Board approve the proposal.

**Appendix E: Mitigating Circumstances Policy, Procedure and Guidance**

24.26 The Mitigating Circumstances Policy, Procedure and Guidance has been updated to reflect recent discussions around reasonable adjustments and the relationship of the policy to the fees policy.

**Endorsed**

24.27 ABExCo endorsed the amendments to the Mitigating Circumstances Policy, Procedure and Guidance and recommends that Academic Board approve the revised policy.

**Appendix F: Late Submission of Coursework Policy and Procedure**

24.28 As part of the ongoing policy review work, the Late Submission of Coursework document has been shortened and revised to make it in line with other College policies such as the Mitigating Circumstances policy.

**Endorsed**

24.29 ABExCo endorsed the amendments to the Late Submission of Coursework Policy and Procedure and recommends that Academic Board approve the revised policy.

**Appendix G: Procedure for Determining Personal Examination Arrangements**

24.30 The Procedure for Determining Personal Examination Arrangements has been updated to clarify the operation of the Personalised Examination Provision Panel. As part of this process, it had been recommended that the Panel include a member of Professional Services.

24.31 Members queried whether the policy applied only to student with disabilities or also to students with other protected characteristics. The PVM-L&T will seek clarification on this point.
Secretary’s note; the procedure that was reviewed only applies to disabled students. There will also be student-facing guidance will include advice that students can ask for special exam arrangements not related to disability – for example religion, pregnancy or injury, by contacting their Programme Director, or the Examinations office, and those parties will liaise internally to put provisions in place.

**Endorsed**

24.32 ABExCo endorsed the amendments to the Procedure for Determining Personal Examination Arrangements and recommends that Academic Board approve the revised procedure.

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

24.33 The Assessment Offences Policy and Procedure has been revised in order to bring it in line with sector practice, align it more closely with current departmental practice across the College, and ensure that all alleged offences can more easily be dealt with at the appropriate stage.

24.34 Consultation on the policy had continued after TQEC’s meeting, closing on May 31. As a result a change had been agreed to the rules for the viva voce examinations carried out when a sub-Board of Examiners believe there may have been plagiarism or collusion. The policy would not require two members of staff not involved in the original marking to conduct the examination. Instead, the requirement would be for two members of staff, one of whom had not been involved in the original marking, to conduct the examination. This change has been made to the document circulated to Academic Board.

24.35 There had also been discussion on what action to take if students did not engage with examination offence procedures. It was recommended that the policy and procedure be agreed as currently drafted, with further consultation and debate in next year’s policy update round if members considered this necessary.

**Endorsed**

24.36 ABExCo endorsed the amended Assessment Offences Policy and Procedure and recommends that Academic Board approve the document.

24.37 Members heard that some members of staff have been asked to allow other institutions to view students’ essays via Turnitin in order to help these institutions investigate potential plagiarism. Members requested clarification as to who owns the intellectual property of the essays and whether they can share the essays with other institutions.

*Secretary’s note; we should not share essays submitted by students unless we have their permission to do so as the intellectual property is owned by the student.*

24.38 Members also asked for the dates of examinations to be released earlier, to improve the student experience and reduce complaints. ABExCo agreed to refer this matter to the Academic Registrar.

**Appendix I: Student Complaints Policy and Procedure**
24.39 TQEC proposed the following two amendments to the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure:
   - Removal of the principle that the College will not normally enact the procedures when a complainant has a tuition fee debt
   - Clarification of the process if a complaint is made against the Academic Standards and Quality team, the Head of Academic Services or nominee, or the Academic Registrar or nominee, all of which have named roles within the complaint process

Endorsed

24.40 ABExCo endorsed the amendments to the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure and recommends that Academic Board approve the revised policy.

Appendix J: Student Attendance Framework for 2016/17

24.41 The Student Attendance Framework was approved as a pilot for 2015/16. It is proposed that the Framework is renewed for a further year for 2016/17 to allow a thorough analysis of the operation and impact of the Framework in 2015/16 based on a full year of data.

Endorsed

24.42 ABExCo endorsed the extension of the Student Attendance Framework pilot for 2016/17 and recommends that Academic Board approve this renewal.

Appendix K: principles for changes to the Marking and Moderation Policy

24.43 Members heard that a draft of the policy will be available for Academic Board on 16 June 2016.

24.44 It was agreed that members of ABExCo would see the draft of the policy and be able to provide feedback before the next meeting of the Academic Board.

Endorsed

24.45 ABExCo endorsed the principles for changes to the Marking and Moderation policy.

25 INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY

Received

25.1 The College’s Internationalisation Strategy (X 2015 25)

Noted

25.2 The Internationalisation Strategy is comprised of two parts. Part one details the principles and policies of the strategy and will be externally facing. Part two is for internal guidance.

25.3 The International Recruitment Strategy is attached as an appendix to the document. Members were informed that the recruitment strategy is a working document.

25.4 The International recruitment Strategy cites the potential for establishing an English language centre at Birkbeck. It was agreed that an assessment of how many people are taking up the current English language earning options will be undertaken before any such plan is finalised.
25.5 It was agreed that at the International Committee will consider whether the internationalisation of the curriculum could become a strategic aim of the strategy.

25.6 It was agreed that whilst a clear aim of the strategy is to recruit as many international students as possible this should be caveated with the requirements that these students be suitably qualified.

25.7 Members noted that the Internationalisation Strategy might overlap with the research aims of the College and the Research Strategy.

25.8 It was agreed that a detailed report, including what inroads have been made into internationalisation so far, will be presented at the Strategic Planning Committee in the autumn term.

Endorsed

28.9 ABExCo endorsed the Internationalisation Strategy and recommends that Academic Board approve the strategy.

26  HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY MEMBERSHIP FEES
Received and noted
26.1 An overview of the HEA membership fees for the College (X 2015 36)

27  FEE WAIVERS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS
Noted
27.1 Members heard that the initiative to provide support for a number of asylum seekers is progressing, with the Widening Access and Fundraising teams working to move the project forward with external funders.

27.2 Members expressed their commitment to the fee waivers for asylum seekers initiative.

28  ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Noted
28.1 This was the last meeting of ABExCo for the Executive Dean of the School of SSHP and the PVM-L&T. Members thanked both for their valued service to the Committee, and noted that both had been recommended to the Nominations Committee to become Fellows of the College.

29  DATES OF THE NEXT MEETING
Noted
29.1 Members noted the dates of the 2016/17 meetings of ABExCo:
- Thursday 27 October 2016, at 2pm
- Thursday 23 February 2017, at 2pm
- Wednesday 7 June 2017, at 2pm