Minutes

Summary

These are the minutes of the meeting of 24 May 2012; they were confirmed at the Academic Board meeting of 19 June 2012.

Recommended Action

The Committee is asked to note the minutes; no further action is required.

Katharine Bock
October 2012
BIRKBECK
University of London

Minutes of the Academic Board Executive Committee

24 May 2012

Present:
Professor David Latchman (Chair), Professor Philip Dewe, Professor Costas Douzinas, Professor Hilary Fraser, Professor Sue Jackson, Professor Nicholas Keep, Ms Tricia King, Professor Philip Powell, Professor Julian Swann, Professor Patricia Tuitt, Professor Matthew Weait, Professor Li Wei, Professor Miriam Zukas

By invitation:
Dr Jasbir Gill (Director of IT services), Mr Philip Payne (Director of Library and Media Services)

In attendance:
Ms Katharine Bock (Deputy Clerk to the Governors), Mr Keith Harrison (Secretary and Clerk to the Governors), Ms Roisin Lynch (Corporate Support Intern), Ms Naina Patel (Director of Human Resources), Mr Trevor Pearce (Deputy Academic Registrar), Ms Megan Reeves (Deputy Secretary), Mr Peter Westley (Director of Finance)

Apologies for absence:
Dr Alex Colas, Dr Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, Professor Matthew Innes, Ms Annabel Jones, Professor John Kelly, Dr Kate Mackenzie Davey, Mr David McGhie, Mr Sean Rillo Raczka

15 MINUTES AND REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD

Noted

15.1 The minutes of the meeting of 15 February 2012, which were confirmed at the Academic Board on 27 February 2012 by the members of the Committee who were present.

15.2 Academic Board approved:
- The Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement
- The revised Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study relating to Concurrent Registration.
- The proposal to amend the policy for the Operation of Boards and Sub-Boards of Examiners
- The proposal to amend the Mitigating Circumstances policy
- The revised Break in Study policy
- New programmes for 2012-13
- The final report on the Quality Strategy 2009-2012
- The establishment of the Centre for Contemporary Literature as a Research Centre
• The establishment of the Birkbeck Institute of Film as a Research Centre
• The revised Regulations for the Research Degrees of MPhil and PhD
• The Policy on Writer Up/Examination Only Research Students
• The Policy and Procedure for the Registration of Mixed Mode Students

16 MATTERS ARISING

Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Supporting Learning
Noted
16.1 The Pro Vice Masters for Research and Learning and Teaching circulated a summary document on the Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Supporting Learning. Research students undertaking thirty or more direct student contact hours per academic year without a lead academic in the classroom would be required to take the programme. Research students undertaking between fifteen and twenty nine direct student contact hours per academic year without a lead academic in the classroom would be strongly advised to take the programme. Research students undertaking more than six direct student contact hours and not undertaking the programme would be required to participate in two half-day events on the fundamentals of teaching, whether or not there was a lead academic in the classroom.

16.2 The QAA expected institutions to have graduate teaching skills programmes.

16.3 The Graduate Certificate programme was an accredited academic programme while the half-day fundamentals of teaching courses did not carry academic credit.

16.4 Members discussed the thirty contact hour limit as a requirement for taking the course. Some members felt that the limit should be higher, but it was noted that thirty hours had been selected to prevent a situation in which a research student could be teaching a whole module without any formal training in teaching. The limit would be reconsidered after the programme had been in operation for one year.

Approved
16.5 The proposed Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Supporting Learning, subject to review after one year.

Code of Practice on Free Speech
Noted
16.6 Following ABExCo and Academic Board’s endorsement the Code had been forwarded to Governors. Governors had made a number of suggestions which had been incorporated into a redrafted version which would be reviewed by the College’s lawyers before being taken back to the Governing Body for approval.

17 MASTER’S REPORT
Noted
17.1 The College’s lobbying efforts were focused on three main areas:
• Encouraging the Government to improve information for part time students. An agreement in principle on this had been reached after a meeting with the Minister for Universities and Science, but financial resources had not yet
been made available. It was likely that there would be a fuller information campaign in 2013-14.

- Opposing the withdrawal of the part time premium HEFCE T funding. Although it had been established that it was more expensive to provide part time courses, part time fees were regulated pro rata to full time fee, limiting the College’s ability to meet increased costs with fee income. It was possible that transitional funding may initially be made available for institutions providing part time courses.
- A longer term campaign for the full integration of part time provision within the Higher Education system.

17.2 There had been further good discussions with the Chief Executive of UCAS. It had been agreed that the course pages for full time courses would include links to the application pages for similar part time courses. UCAS would also consider the possibility of linking to Birkbeck’s website from the front page of the UCAS site.

18 SELECTION OF STAFF FOR THE REF

Received

18.1 The draft Code of Practice on Selection of Staff for the REF (X 2011 10)

Noted

18.2 The Code of Practice was an equal opportunities document intended to ensure fairness and the equal treatment of all staff throughout the selection process. It did not set out the criteria or thresholds for inclusion in the REF, as this was a separate academically driven decision.

18.3 The document had been considered by Strategic Planning Committee, and was being considered by the Trade Unions with a deadline for feedback of 30 May 2012. It would be forwarded to the Academic Board and to the Governors for formal approval.

18.4 ABExCo recommended that a summary be added to the document explaining its status and aims, before wider distribution.

Agreed

18.5 Subject to incorporation of comments from members and the Trade Unions received before the deadline, to forward the Code of Practice on Selection of Staff for the REF to Academic Board with a recommendation for it to be endorsed for Governors’ approval.

19 NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME 2013-14

Received

19.1 A note on National Scholarship Programme (NSP) allocations 2013-14 (X 2011 11)

Noted

19.2 NSP allocations needed to be confirmed before the Access Agreement for 2013-14 was submitted. NSP consisted of a Government allocation based on student numbers to be matched by funding from the institution, launched by the Government to mitigate the impact of higher fees on the poorest students in the new system. The scheme was only available to part time students in the form of fee
waivers, whereas full time students could receive a combination of fee waiver, cash bursary and discounted accommodation. NSP was directed at the first year of study, with the entire Government portion restricted to first years even though the allocation had doubled between 2012-13 and 2013-14 and was set to increase again in 2014-15. Institutions were allowed to spread their match funding for individuals over subsequent years, but with four-year degrees the allocation would spread thinly.

19.3 The rules of the scheme were not helpful for Birkbeck and for part time students. Part time students needed help with living and learning expenses as much as full time students; and the focus on the first year only did not recognise the particular need to promote retention for part time students. It was reported that the College would be taking part in a review of NSP in June 2012 and making the case for changing the rules of the scheme.

19.4 The issue had been discussed by the Fee, Bursary and Scholarship Committee reporting to Strategic Planning Committee, which had recommended that the most equitable way to allocate the NSP funding, striking a balance between making as many awards as possible and making them of equal value to part time students, was to award £3,000 fee waivers against the first 120 credits of study, regardless of study intensity; to review the scheme annually; to seek to extend fee waivers with donation income; to continue with the separate College scheme to award cash bursaries to less well-off students; and to make a strong case for changes to the NSP rules on awarding cash bursaries and funding continuing years.

19.5 Birkbeck’s criteria for NSP fee waivers were: new system students with a household income of below £20K, studying at 25% FTE intensity or more and on a programme with a full time equivalent fee of £6,000 or more.

19.6 Members discussed the possibility of changing the income threshold, as there was an argument that it was better to make a higher number of awards to more people rather than a smaller number of higher value awards. However, the number of old system students currently awarded the Part Time Grant indicated that there would be a high level of demand for NSP. It was agreed that the income threshold would be reassessed until the College had a better idea from the 2012-13 intake of student household income and current and likely future demand on the NSP scheme.

Endorsed

19.7 The approach to allocation of National Scholarship Programme funds, as set out in 19.4 and 19.5 above.

20  **TEACHING AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE**  
Received

20.1 The Report of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (**X 2011 12**)  

**Recommended for Approval by Academic Board:**

20.2 **Fitness to Study Policy**
20.3 Revised Student Dispute Resolution Policy and Procedure

20.4 Policy on Personal Tutoring

20.5 Policy on the Recording of Lectures and Other Teaching Sessions

20.6 The Policy on Intercollegiate Study, subject to consideration by the Strategic Planning Committee.

20.7 Modifications to the MA Archaeology

20.8 The new Cert HE Combined Studies

20.9 The new BA in Accountancy and Business, which had been approved by Chair’s action on behalf of the Programmes Committee and TQEC.

Noted

20.10 The Students’ Union had received a copy of the Fitness to Study and Dispute Resolution policies but had not yet commented.

20.11 In relation to the policy on recording lectures, the Board noted that in future further discussion would be necessary around policies on the distribution of other teaching materials, for example lecture slides. It was agreed that the College should review its approach to making online material available.

Action

20.12 (JG) Assess the technical viability of expanding the range and distribution of Birkbeck’s online material. If feasible, a working group could be established.

20.13 TQEC had received an update on three term learning. The pilot exercise of observing and learning from programmes in which three term learning had already been implemented was complete, and in 2012/13 a more systematic pilot would begin in which new programmes would teach over three terms for the first time.

20.14 TQEC also noted progress in developing the Key Information Sets of standard programme information that would be a national requirement from 2013. The guidance from HEFCE on the production of Key Information Sets was geared towards full time programmes and the College therefore considering how best to contextualise the information, so that it made sense in relation to part time programmes.

20.15 A unit for learning and teaching enhancement, aimed at sharing good practice and promoting professional activities to enhance learning and teaching at Birkbeck, was being established.

20.16 TQEC agreed a new format for graduation ceremonies. In future there would be ceremonies for undergraduate degrees and graduate certificates; for postgraduate degrees including taught and research degrees and for Certificates and Diplomas of HE.
21   RESEARCH COMMITTEE
    Received
21.1 The report of the Research Committee (X 2011 13)

    Recommended for Approval by Academic Board
21.2 The revised Policy on Maternity Leave for Research Students

22   STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION
     COMMITTEE
    Received
22.1 The Report of the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee (X
     2011 14)

    Recommended for Approval by Academic Board
22.2 The initiation of Phase 2 of the Student Retention Strategy

    Noted
22.3 Both TQEC and SEWP had considered and endorsed the initiation of Phase 2 of the
     Student Retention Strategy.

    Noted
22.4 The Pro Vice Master (Student Experience) invited comments on the proposals to
     rationalize and better co-ordinate student surveys that had been discussed by SEWP.

23   COLLEGE BOARDS OF EXAMINERS 2010/11
    Noted
23.1 The Report of the four College Boards of Examiners to Academic Board on activity
     from the 2010/11 assessment and award rounds (X 2011 15)