1 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCHEME OF MEMBERSHIP
Confirmed
1.1 Terms of reference, scheme of membership and membership for 2009-10, revised to reflect Birkbeck’s new academic structure (X 2009 01)

Agreed
1.2 Addition of the College Dean ex officio to the scheme of membership

Noted
1.3 The revised academic committee structure and the committees reporting to ABExCo and Academic Board (X 2009 02)

2 MINUTES AND REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Meeting of 26 May 2009
Noted
2.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 26 May 2009 had been confirmed at the Academic Board’s meeting on 9 June 2009 by the members of the Committee who were present.
2.2 Academic Board:

- Approved the amendments to the following Programmes:
  - Certificate HE Legal Methods – amendments to bring the programme in line with the Legal Methods and Legal Systems course taken by first year students on the four-year LLB programme;
  - Certificate HE Introductory Studies – to increase the limit on the number of credits taken from another Certificate programme;
  - Certificate HE Screenwriting – amendments to the modular structure.
- Approved corrections and clarifications to the previously approved (Common Awards Scheme) Taught Programme Regulations.
- Approved revisions to the following academic Policies and Procedures made under the Common Awards Scheme:
  - College policy for Marking and Moderation;
  - Mitigating Circumstances;
  - Assessment Offences;
  - Procedures for Appeals against Decisions of Boards of Examiners, subject to further discussion with the Chair of Teaching Committee and the Students’ Union representatives on membership of and attendance at Appeal Panels.
- Agreed to the establishment of the following Research Centre:
  - Centre for Media, Culture and Creative Practice, subject to the sending of an all-staff email inviting interested parties to discuss collaboration with the Centre directors.

Meeting of 8 June 2009

Confirmed

2.3 The Minutes of the meeting of 8 June 2009 at which the procedure for agreeing the 2009-10 College budget and Income Distribution Model were agreed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

UK border agency requirements

Noted

3.1 It had been reported in May 2009 that new legislation operated by the UK Border Agency would require the College to verify that staff and students who were not British citizens were legitimately in the country; and to be satisfied that overseas students were attending their courses. Staff, including sessional lecturers, were being asked to bring their passports/visas to work to be checked. It was confirmed that the College needed to take these steps to comply with the legislation, but that it would not extend checking beyond the minimum legislative requirements.

3.2 On the student side, the Border Agency scheme was delayed. The College was ready to start issuing licences once the scheme was in place.

3.3 On the staff side, guidance had been issued and training given to programme managers, but some staff, especially staff with long service, were asking why they needed to present passports.
**ACTION**

3.4 (NP) Offer training as already planned to School administrators.

3.5 Produce a guidance note to be issued with requests for passports, reiterating the need to comply with legislation and explaining that requests would be made to all staff on issue or renewal of contract, regardless of length of service, to avoid making distinctions between staff on the basis of length of service.

**Senate House Library**

Noted

3.6 Following the University’s review of the Senate House Library (SHL) it had been agreed that the Library would move to a usage-based subscription model driven by membership, borrowing and use of e-resources.

3.7 Birkbeck was likely to pay more than under the previous model because students made significant use of the library. Under the Income Distribution Model these costs would transfer to Schools and an appropriate driver for distribution would need to be identified. Some Schools made heavier use of SHL than others but all Schools should make a contribution.

3.8 The student representatives noted that SHL was a resource highly valued by students and asked how the College would ensure that it was not perceived purely as a financial burden. The Committee heard that a strategy would be developed to enable students to continue using the Library to their benefit, also taking account of the need to be cost-effective and to take advantage of the complementarity of College and SHL collections.

3.9 Further work would be carried out to identify patterns of use and likely costs and this would be reported back to the Committee.

4 **MASTER’S REPORT**

Noted

4.1 The Master had discussed his annual paper on the strategic direction of Birkbeck to Governors and to staff. Governors had endorsed the paper at their annual strategic meeting.

4.2 The Government had published a framework for Higher Education for next 15 years. The emphasis on part time, foundation and flexible learning was welcomed by the College. The focus was on equipping people to do their current or future jobs better and Birkbeck should be seeking opportunities to participate. The issue of fees would be considered separately by the Government’s fees review and Birkbeck would continue to lobby for proper consideration of part time fees.
4.3 The student representatives reported on a positive meeting with the shadow Secretary of State’s special advisor at which support for Birkbeck’s agenda was expressed. They would make a report to the Academic Board.

5 TEACHING & QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

Received

5.1 The Report of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee following its meeting on 6 October 2009 and to consider its recommendations. (X 2009 03)

Learning and Teaching Strategy

Considered

5.2 The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2009-12, which had been endorsed by the TQEC.

Noted

5.3 The strategy included a project (6) seeking ways to build on the three-year undergraduate programmes being piloted by Law, Psychology and Philosophy. These would more appropriately be badged as flexible accelerated programmes rather than full time.

5.4 The detailed reference to research centres would be removed because research centres were listed elsewhere under the aegis of Research Committee.

5.5 The distinction between part-time and full-time was becoming less distinct as the College sought to maintain its longstanding evening teaching model while offering more options for flexibility alongside the four year undergraduate degree programme. This was an appropriate time to revisit the mission statement and to consider building in references to flexible learning as well as provision of part time higher education courses.

ACTION

5.6 (KH) Draft a revision to the mission statement, making reference to provision of flexible learning, for consideration at the next meeting.

Endorsed for approval by Academic Board:

5.7 The Learning and Teaching Strategy amended as proposed. The strategy was commended as a useful document focused on addressing some of the current genuine challenges for the College.

QAA Institutional Audit

Noted

5.8 The College was preparing for institutional audit in June 2010, preceded by a briefing visit in May. A steering group was preparing an evaluative institutional briefing paper for submission to the QAA in spring 2010. The paper would be circulated to key staff in December for input and comment and presented to academic committees for endorsement in the spring term. The group was also identifying likely areas of focus for the auditors, either as follow-up from previous audit recommendations or because there had been changes and developments in the College.
Continuation of the Degree Awarding Powers assessment would follow the conclusion of the audit and was expected to be principally a paper based exercise allowing the assessors to assure themselves that new committee structures and memberships were functioning appropriately following restructuring.

**Student course representatives**

**ACTION**

5.10 (Executive Deans to refer to School colleagues) Schools were asked to identify student course representatives where these were not already appointed and forward details to the Students’ Union.

**Other business referred by TQEC**

Noted

5.11 TQEC’s approval of the revised programme approval process to commence from the start of the 2009/10 academic session;

5.12 TQEC’s approval of revisions to the College’s Quality Assurance/Enhancement Code of Practice;

5.13 The Annual Report made to the University Senate on Visiting Examiners’ Reports and Quality Assurance Processes;

5.14 TQEC’s consideration of an annual learning and teaching event for the discussion of pedagogy and the sharing of good practice;

5.15 Reports on the National Student Survey

5.16 A report on School responses to programme monitoring reports

5.17 Reports of and responses made to points raised following Internal Reviews.

**6 COLLEGE BOARDS OF EXAMINERS**

Noted

6.1 The current constitution of the College Boards of Examiners as approved by Academic Board in June 2009:

- A Chair appointed by Academic Board;
- Two Members of Academic Board from each School that offers programmes or modules within the College Board’s remit;
- An intercollegiate examiner appointed by Academic Board;
- An external examiner appointed by Academic Board;

6.2 The view was expressed that participation in the Board of Examiners should not be restricted to the Professors, Readers and elected members of Academic Board and that a wider range of academic staff should have the opportunity to participate. The Chairs of the
College Boards of Examiners should be co-opted as members of the Academic Board if necessary.

**Recommended to Academic Board**

6.3 Amendment to the constitution of the College Boards of Examiners to read:
- A Chair appointed by Academic Board;
- Two Members of Academic staff from each School that offers programmes or modules within the College Board’s remit;
- An intercollegiate examiner appointed by Academic Board;
- An external examiner appointed by Academic Board;

7 **RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

Received

7.1 The Report of the Research Committee following its meeting on 13 October 2009. (X 2009 04)

**Research Excellence Framework**

Noted

7.2 Research Committee had established working groups to prepare for the Research Excellence Framework. An academic working group would consider the strategy for and nature of the submission and a support working group would put in place the necessary administrative and technological infrastructure. Although HEFCE had not yet finalised its guidelines on the REF, the College would make an early start on identifying its strategy for submission.

7.3 The academic working group with representatives from each School was working on guidelines for School research committees. It was aiming to define by Easter the Units of Assessment that the College would return. As with RAE2008, small submissions would be avoided and consideration given to joint submissions with other institutions. Research Committee had endorsed a proposal for a dry run based on the research output of the agreed Units of Assessment, to take place in autumn 2010.

7.4 As well as research output, REF submissions would be evaluated on the basis of research impact and research environment. HEFCE was running a pilot study on options for measuring impact. In the interim, the working group members working with Schools would consider possible case studies demonstrating research impact.

7.5 Members noted two potential resources for demonstrating impact: evidence based on Birkbeck’s emphases on public engagement and existing guidance on defining research impact in grant applications.

**Recommended to Academic Board:**

7.6 The College should undertake an REF “Dry Run” during the Autumn term 2010-11.
Appointive of research degree examiners
Recommended to Academic Board

7.7 Approval of revisions to the procedure for the appointment of research degree examiners, reflecting the new school structures.

Other business referred by Research Committee:

7.8 Establishment of a working group to review the College Research Strategy and its implementation.

7.9 Development of proposals to ensure ongoing compliance with external research ethics requirements.

7.10 Bids for research studentships, including collaborative work with other Bloomsbury Colleges institutions for the forthcoming ESRC Revised Postgraduate Training Network application process and by Schools for MRC-funded DTA studentships for 2010/11 and 2011/12 and the allocation of AHRC Block Grant Partnership awards for 2009/10.

7.11 Closure of the Cultures of Consumption Centre within the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology

7.12 Clarification of the status of the Information Management & Web Technologies Group and the Governance, Innovation & Public Policy Centre. These were not Research Centres.

7.13 Initiation of a review of the College Research School.

8 STUDENT EXPERIENCE & WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

Received

8.1 The Report of the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee following its meeting on 14 October 2009. (X 2009 05)

Recommended to Academic Board

8.2 Approval of revisions to the Committee’s Terms of Reference (attached)

Noted

8.3 The SEWPC was developing a strategic assessment of widening participation activities in the College, for submission to HEFCE.

8.4 The Committee had identified initial areas of focus: student recruitment linked to widening participation and student retention linked to the student experience. It would develop the existing strategy for Widening Participation and produce a strategy for enhancing the student experience.

8.5 The Pro-Vice-Masters for Learning and Teaching and Student Experience would establish a forum for the Assistant Deans with recruitment/retention and learning/teaching remits to work together on improving student retention, a critical College-wide area.
8.6 It was confirmed that the SEWPC had a remit covering all students but that its current focus on student retention was linked largely to undergraduate activity. The Research Committee, through its review of the College Research School, would lead on consideration of postgraduate student matters and brief other committees as appropriate.

9 ACADEMIC BOARD
Confirmed
9.1 Agenda items for the meeting of the Academic Board on 18 November 2009
- Master’s report
- Master’s paper on the strategic direction of Birkbeck
- Proposed revisions to the Board’s Standing Orders (X 2009 06).
- Learning and Teaching Strategy
- REF preparations and proposed dry run
- ABExCo Minutes setting out other recommendations and reports of Committees

10 REGISTRY SERVICES
Received
10.1 A report from the Academic Registrar confirming the new structure of Registry Services:
- Academic Services
- Disability Support
- Examinations
- Operations and Projects
- Quality Enhancement
- Student Administration
- Student Finance Support
- Student Services
- Study Skills Support

11 STUDENTS’ UNION
Noted
11.1 The student representatives invited staff to join a staff-student group participating in a campaign on Government and opposition Higher Education policy.

ACTION
11.2 (Executive Deans) Consider members of staff in Schools that might usefully be involved.

12 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS
Noted
12.1 Dates of meetings for the remainder of the session:
- Wednesday 10 February 2010 at 10.30am;
- Thursday 3 June 2010 at 10.30am.