BIRKBECK
University of London

Minutes of the Academic Board Executive Committee

25 October 2010

Present:
Professor David Latchman (Chair)
Professor John Annette, Professor Philip Dewe, Mr James Emmott, Professor Hilary Fraser,
Dr Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, Professor Sue Jackson, Professor Nicholas Keep, Mrs
Tricia King, Professor Mike Oaksford, Professor Philip Powell, Professor Julian Swann,
Professor Patricia Tuit, Professor Miriam Zukas,

By invitation:
Mr Philip Payne (Librarian).

In attendance:
Mr Keith Harrison (Secretary and Clerk to the Governors), Mr Dean Pateman (Academic
Registrar), Ms Megan Reeves (Deputy Secretary), Mrs Katharine Bock (Deputy Clerk to the
Governors), Ms Julia Lerch (Corporate Support Intern)

Apologies for absence:
Mr Richard Clarke, Professor Costas Douzinas, Professor Stephen Frosh, Dr Jasbir Gill
(Director of IT Services), Professor Matthew Innes, Dr Kate Mackenzie Davey, Mr David
McGhie (Director of Planning and Estates), Ms Naina Patel (Director of Human Resources),
Mr Peter Westley (Director of Finance).

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCHEME OF MEMBERSHIP
Confirmed

1.1 ABExCo’s terms of reference, scheme of membership and membership for 2010-
11. (X 2010 01)

2 MINUTES AND REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Noted

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 3 June 2010 were confirmed at the Academic
Board on 16 June 2010 by the members of the Committee who were present.

2.2 Academic Board:
• Endorsed the Student Retention Strategy
• Approved the Regulations for 2010-11 for the following External Programmes:
  o BA Spanish and Latin American Studies
  o BA Philosophy
  o Introduction to Philosophy short courses
• Approved amendments to the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study as recommended by TQEC
  o Reassessment
  o Capping of marks
  o Compensated fails
  o Minimum volume of study
  o Maximum period of registration
• Approved the establishment of the Birkbeck Graduate Research School as recommended by Research Committee following the review of the College Research School
• Approved amendments to the College Research Ethics policy, revised as agreed
• Approved a mandate that all research papers should be deposited in the College’s Institutional Repository from 2011-12
• Approved the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment and monitoring report to be forwarded to Governors for their approval
• Noted the closure of the South East Regional Research Laboratory

3 MASTER’S REPORT
Noted
3.1 The Master’s strategy paper 2010-11 had been endorsed by Governors and would be discussed at the Master’s address to staff.

3.2 The Browne Review had reported on 12 October recommending removal of the HE tuition fee cap and revision of the student loan system. Students would finance the increased fees via state loans.

3.3 The government Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) had been announced on 20 October. There were 40% cuts in HE funding, with the expectation that institutions would in future get their teaching income from increased tuition fees if the Browne Review recommendations were taken up.

3.4 An important positive aspect of Browne for Birkbeck was recommendation that student loans for tuition fees should be available to all students studying at 33% or more of full time intensity. The opening up of student loans to part time students had already been endorsed by Government.
3.5 The College was pursuing a dual strategy of lobbying to reduce the study intensity threshold to 25%, as many Birkbeck students currently studied at 25% intensity. At the same time development of modular provision at 33% intensity was being explored.

3.6 Some additional initial challenges for Birkbeck were
- setting appropriate levels for tuition fees given that the HEFCE T funding system was likely to reduce or disappear
- responding to the likely need for some ringfenced student numbers for students without traditional university entry qualifications, linked to widening participation objectives;
- pressure on the estate, in particular teaching space as student numbers grew further.

3.7 Much of the detail of the implementation of Browne was still to be resolved and Birkbeck would need to influence this wherever possible, for example with BIS and UCAS on areas including access to loans for ELQ students, older students and students already earning over the threshold for payback. With the cessation of HEFCE funding there would be no reason to charge differential ELQ fees, although it was not clear what access ELQ students would have to student loans.

3.8 Browne included a proposed mechanism for student numbers overall to be regulated using an entry qualification tariff along the lines of the UCAS tariff, although the extent and detail of regulation had not yet been determined. This was an area in which Birkbeck would seek to influence policy, stressing the importance of admitting students without traditional entry qualifications but with the aptitude to benefit from HE.

3.9 ABExCo acknowledged that there would, inevitably, be diverse individual views on these major changes and their academic impact. Nevertheless, the College as an institution would need to engage with the Browne recommendations to benefit from the opportunities they offered, including access to student finance for part time students and the opportunity to develop more innovative part time provision. The potential negative impact on the arts and social sciences was discussed and it was confirmed that the College should be developing on a broad front rather than focusing specifically on science or humanities.

3.10 The impact on research was not yet clear cut. The CSR cuts involved areas responsible for both the HEFCE QR budget and the research council budgets, although no announcement had been made about how the budgets would be administered or whether the new Higher Education Council would administer QR funding.
3.11 The College was not anticipating compulsory redundancies as a result of funding cuts. Initial views were that the new system was overall a very positive opportunity for the College, although portfolio review and course evaluation should continue as previously established.

3.12 The most important short term imperative was to continue to expand student numbers - including fundable numbers - because it would take time for the post-Browne system to be phased in and the current system phased out. 2011-12 would be particularly challenging as the initial cuts would be made that year with the existing fee system still in place.

4 TEACHING & QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

Received

4.1 The Report of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee following its meeting on 7 October 2010. (X 2010 02)

Recommended for approval by Academic Board

4.2 Revised College Policy on the Accreditation of Prior Learning

4.3 Dates of term for 2016-17
   Autumn Term       Monday 3 October to Friday 16 December 2016
   Spring Term       Monday 9 January to Friday 24 March 2017
   Summer Term       Monday 24 April to Friday 7 July 2017

4.4 University of London International Programme Regulations for the PGDip/MSc Organizational Psychology/Human Resource Management (OPHRM) for 2010/11

Noted

4.5 TQEC’s report on
   • approval of new programmes
   • programmes that have formally been withdrawn or suspended and reported to the College Programmes Committee
   • revisions to the programme approval guidance notes and associated documentation for 2010-11
   • the initial overview report on the outcome of the 2010 National Student Survey
   • revisions made to the College’s Quality Assurance/Enhancement Code of Practice for the 2010-11 academic session
   • the Annual Report to the University Senate on Visiting Examiners’ Reports and Quality Assurance Processes
• the research-related teaching survey
• annual reports from the Assistant Deans (Learning and Teaching) on engagement with the College Learning and Teaching Strategy and all areas of their learning and teaching activities
• reports from the Assistant Deans (Learning and Teaching) on progress with the College’s Learning and Teaching Strategy projects.
• summary of points raised following Internal Reviews of: History, Classic and Archaeology; Psychosocial Studies; Media and Cultural Studies; Management;
• Department responses received following Internal Reviews of: Organizational Psychology; History, Classics and Archaeology; Psychosocial Studies
• a report of the TQEC Panels which scrutinised a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programme reports on the 2008/09 academic session

4.6 TQEC also noted receipt of the QAA’s report following the successful Institutional Audit. ABExCo congratulated colleagues involved in the audit on the excellent outcome and noted that this would enable to resumption of the College’s application for Degree Awarding Powers.

4.7 The quantity of business considered by TQEC was growing and in response the Chair had set up a working group of Assistant Deans Learning and Teaching meeting monthly to engage more fully in the business referred to TQEC.

5 RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Received

5.1 The Report of the Research Committee following its meeting on 12 October 2010. (X 2010 03)

Agreed

5.2 To endorse the draft College Research Strategy, subject to minor amendment, with final approval to be given either by Academic Board by the Chair of Academic Board after appropriate consultation.

Recommended to Academic Board

5.3 Establishment of a new Centre for the Study of British Politics & Public Life

5.4 Inclusion in the Institutional Repository of publications produced by academic staff who had left the institution and publications produced by academic staff joining the institution that were published before their joining date.

6 STUDENT EXPERIENCE & WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE
Received

6.1 The Report of the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee following its meeting on 6 October 2010. *(X 2010 04)*

Noted

6.2 The quality of the student experience and the promotion of widening participation would be important in the post-Browne environment.

6.3 The student retention strategy steering group had met and agreed the individual project strands that would implement the strategy.

7 BIRKBECK INSTITUTES

Confirmed

7.1 Arrangements for appointing the Directors of the Birkbeck Institutes *(X 2010 05)*

8 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS:

Noted

8.1 The dates of meetings for the remainder of the session:
- Wednesday 9 February 2011 at 14.00pm;
- Tuesday 31 May 2011 at 14.00pm.