Minutes of the Academic Board Executive Committee
25 October 2011

Present:
Professor Philip Dewe (Chair), Professor Hilary Fraser, Professor Matthew Innes, Ms Annabel Jones, Professor Nicholas Keep, Mrs Tricia King, Dr Kate McKenzie Davey, Professor Philip Powell, Professor Patricia Tuit, Professor Matthew Weait, Professor Miriam Zukas

By invitation:
Dr Jasbir Gill (Director, IT services)

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

Apologies for absence:
Dr Alex Colas, Professor Costas Douzinas, Dr Jasbir Gill (Director of IT Services), Dr Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, Professor Matthew Innes, Professor Sue Jackson, Professor John Kelly, Professor David Latchman, Mr David McGhie (Director of Planning and Estates), Mr Sean Rillo-Raczka, Professor Julian Swann, Professor Li Wei, Mr Peter Westley (Director of Finance).

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCHEME OF MEMBERSHIP
1.1 ABExCo’s Terms of Reference, Scheme of Membership and membership for 2011-12 (X 2011 01)

Recommended to Academic Board
1.2 To amend the Scheme of Membership of ABExCo to define a quorum of seven members, reflecting standard College practice

2 MINUTES AND REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
2.1 The minutes of the meeting of 31 May 2011, which were confirmed at the Academic Board on 21 June 2011 by the members of the Committee who were present.

2.2 Academic Board
• Approved the Dissertation Supervision Policy
• Approved the revised Policy on Assessment Offences.
• Approved the revised Student Dispute Resolution Policy and Procedure
• Approved the designation of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism as a research centre of the College.
• Approved the revised Good Practice in Research Policy.
• Approved the Procedure for Appeals Against Decisions of Examiners of Research Degrees
• Approved the proposal to provide for the normal word length for research degree theses in Geography to be up to 100,000 words (PhD) / 80,000 words (MPhil).
• Approved the proposal for central resource for and co-ordination of generic skills training funding for research students via Birkbeck Graduate Research School (BGRS) and continuation of the system through which BGRS allocates funding to Schools and departments to deliver generic skills courses for research students.

3 MASTERS REPORT
Noted
3.1 The Master’s strategy paper for 2011-12 had been approved by the Governors and would be discussed at the Master’s address to staff.

4 TEACHING AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
Received
4.1 The Report of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee following its meeting on 11 October 2011 (X 2011 02).

Recommended for approval by Academic Board
4.2 The new proposal on the criteria for academic promotions
4.3 The recommendations relating to the development of learning across 3 terms, on the condition that these were presented as proposals for dealing with the technical obstacles to three term learning rather than as the imposition of three term learning across the board.
4.4 In principle approval of the Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement
4.5 The proposed terms and conditions for the issue of Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies
4.6 The revised draft Policy on Supervision of Dissertations by Taught Students
4.7 The new proposal to amend the date by which the College will publish undergraduate degree awards made to students for 2011-12 (20 July 2012)
4.8 The revised Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study relating to Compensated Fails.

4.9 The draft QAA Institutional Audit Action Plan.

4.10 The draft regulations for 2012 for the MSc / PG Dip Organisational Psychology & Human Resource Management offered by the College for the University of London International Programmes.

Noted

4.11 The QAA’s assessment of the College’s application for Degree Awarding Powers was in its final stages and a decision was due in March 2012.

4.12 ABExCo noted TQEC’s consideration of the report of the Review of the Provision and Development of Foundation Degrees. It recommended that Foundation Degree review be revisited in the light of recent discussion of the need to consider College strategy on employability.

5 RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Received

5.1 The Report of the Research Committee following its meeting on 4 October 2011 (X 2011 03)

Recommended for approval by Academic Board

5.2 The proposal to establish procedures for checks to be undertaken within Schools on research grant applications.

5.3 The proposal to mandate submission of one hard copy and one electronic copy of successful research degree theses to the College. This was to facilitate a move towards publishing theses electronically, and the proposal was recommended on the condition that supervisors would be warned of the timeline of the implementation of this well in advance to allow them to take the necessary actions to ensure compliance with copyright law.

5.4 The proposed Bloomsbury Colleges Studentship nomination procedure.

5.5 The proposed Break in Study procedure for Research Students.

5.6 The proposal to amend the College’s Policy on Good Practice in Research to provide for final versions of outputs to be submitted to the College’s Institutional Repository.

6 STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

Received

6.1 The Report of the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee following its meeting on 12 October 2011. (X 2011 04)

Noted
6.2 The ‘Agenda for Student Experience Work’ paper outlined the four strands of student experience for the 2011/12 academic year. These were:

- Lobbying and influencing government and other important HE stakeholders to help smooth the passage for Birkbeck students as part-time students to join the mainstream for fees and funding in 2012.
- Maximising recruitment in the challenging new HE environment in 2012
- Maximising retention in the challenging new HE environment in 2012
- Preparations for the student experience at University Square, Stratford

6.3 A new approach was being taken this year, bringing in lobbying and influencing to sit alongside student experience work. It was felt that this was appropriate, as the results of this lobbying were key in ensuring a positive student experience under the new system.

6.4 Significant lobbying work had been done to make the case for part time provision. As a result of this work Birkbeck had already hosted several visits from key civil servants and other figures who wished to see the nature of Birkbeck student life for themselves.

6.5 Further work on retention monitoring and strategy was taking place. Discussion also took place in the impact on progression and retention of the timing of confirmation of the previous year’s assessment outcomes.

**Action**

6.6 *(DP)* Produce and circulate some formal guidance on progression onto postgraduate courses for undergraduate students when results have not yet been published.

7 **FEES, BURSARIES AND SCHOLARSHIPS COMMITTEE**

7.1 The annual report of the Fees, Bursaries and Scholarships Committee *(X 2011 05)*

**Noted**

7.2 The undergraduate bursary and scholarships scheme for 2012/13 contained the agreed eligibility criteria for awards. These criteria were in the process of being confirmed with OFFA.

7.3 OFFA had praised Birkbeck’s criteria and proposals, and unlike most other 1994 group institutions we have not been asked to make any changes. Our criteria had grown organically out of our ongoing mission to support access to higher education for non-traditional students.

7.4 HEFCE had decided that ‘end on’ students, those continuing from CertHE to degree without a break, would count as ‘old regime’ students for funding purposes. This decision had been taken as a result of our lobbying to facilitate progression in the post 2012 system.

7.5 Students starting on Certificate programmes now and moving onto degrees would still be ‘old regime’ students and current level fees would be applicable to them.
7.6 It was noted that there might be some situations in which students who would qualify as old regime might wish to choose to pay the new fees and take the new loans. It was important to ensure that we were sending very clear messages to students about all of their choices.

7.7 It was felt that the scholarships and bursaries entitlements outlined in the paper sent a clear positive message to potential students that although the College had not been in favour of the new fee system, we were now able to systematically give payments to all eligible students.

7.8 The College had been lobbying with OFFA to allow us to use the fee waiver scholarships from the National Scholarship Scheme more creatively and to support retention and progression.

7.9 Tuition fees had been kept low for access-focused Certificates such as Legal Methods and Higher Education Introductory Studies. This sent a strong positive message to encourage students to continue onto an undergraduate degree.

7.10 The representative from the Student Union expressed concerns that the 50% proposed bursary would not be enough, and that the people who would be most in need of it would not necessarily know how to access it.

7.11 It was confirmed that the College had fully considered the options for fee waiver levels felt it was better to help a larger number of people with 50% than give full fee waivers to half of that number. The system would be renewed annually to ensure its effectiveness.

7.12 A proposal was being developed for a small number of full fee waivers to be available to those taking Higher Education Introductory Studies in outreach centres, as a way of highlighting our mission to widen participation in higher education.

7.13 The hardship fund was previously used to top up PTG1 funding. A review of the fund was planned, to include student consultation, to ensure that the new fund would be appropriate in the new funding climate.

Noted

7.14 There was uncertainty among postgraduate students as to how they would be impacted by the 2012 fees. It was important that the College communicate a clear message that, for the majority of applicants, the fees would simply be an inflation based increase on last year.

7.15 Some subject areas were planning to charge higher fees, in response to funding and market changes. It would be necessary for Schools to balance considerations of lost funding with the potential that increased fees could have a significant negative impact on recruitment.

Agreed

7.16 Postgraduate fees should be confirmed and published as soon as possible, to offset potential confusion.