BIRKBECK
University of London

Minutes of the ACADEMIC BOARD

28 November 2013

Present

Chiara Barontini, Ron Smith, Rebecca Gumbrell–Mcormick, Matthew Longo, David Latchman (Chair), Dean Pateman, Philip Dewe, Sue Jackson, Tricia King, Tim Markham, Trevor Fenner, Lynne Segal, Diane Horn, Gerald Roberts, Hilary Downes, Nicholas Stewart, Philip Powell, Nicholas Keep, Miriam Zukas, Alex Poulavassilis, Dan Law, Stephen Frosh, Marjorie Lorch, Li Wei, Robert Atkinson, Dionyssis Dimitrakopoulos, Bunakiye Japheta, Ron Smith, Katherine Inpian, Jennifer Baird.

In Attendance

William Scott, Scott Miller, Katharine Bock, Keith Harrison

1  MINUTES
Confirmed
1.1 The minutes of the meeting on 20 June 2013.

2  REPORT TO GOVERNORS
Noted
2.1 The report made to the Governors following the meeting on 20 June 2013. (AB 2013 01)

3  MEMBERSHIP 2013-14
Noted
3.1 Academic Board's membership in 2013 -14. (AB 2013 02)

4  MASTER’S REPORT
Noted
4.1 The Master had reported discussion of his annual strategy paper with the Governors and staff. The situation in the College had improved since the report was written, with confirmation of a robust financial out-turn in 2012-13 and very successful student recruitment in 2013-14, especially in the three year undergraduate degrees. Continuing expansion in this area would depend on the College successfully agreeing with HEFCE an increased student number control. There was an impending challenge to maintain Masters degree recruitment when students started graduating from the new system with increased levels of loan to pay back.
4.2 The success in student recruitment was achieved within the parameters of the College's traditional mission. Although new and different groups of students had been recruited, they were still the kinds of non-traditional student who would not necessarily have gone to mainstream universities.

4.3 Governors had asked for a survey on the characteristics and motivations of the three year undergraduate students, the outcome of which would be circulated in the spring term.

4.4 Academic Board joined the Master in congratulating the Pro Vice Master for Research, the Academic Registrar and their colleagues on the REF Working Group for successfully making the College’s Research Excellence Framework submission, well within the deadline.

4.5 Members asked about the implications for the College of the demise of the 1994 group of research intensive smaller universities, of which the College was a member. These were not considered to be significant, firstly because aside from research issues the Group did not have significant resonance with Birkbeck’s mission and secondly because over recent years the group had lost focus and its raison d'etre. Many members had already left to join other groups or to become non-aligned. The Bloomsbury Colleges group was exploring whether there was benefit in a larger London based group of institutions with compatible interests.

5 ACADEMIC BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Received and confirmed, by members of ABExCo present

5.1 The Minutes of the Academic Board Executive Committee following its meeting on 30 October 2013 (AB 2013 03)

6 RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Received

6.1 The report of the Research Committee (AB 2013 04)

Approved

6.2 Proposals to amend its Terms of Reference to take into account the formation of the College Ethics Committee.

6.3 Establishment of a research centre for Medical Humanities, a key part of the research strategy in the School of Arts.

6.4 Establishment of a College panel to appoint examiners for PhD students, in place of the previous four panels.

6.5 Introduction of a conditional pass for PhD candidates subject to their making minor amendments and resubmitting within six months; and exceptionally twelve months at the discretion of the examiners.

Noted
6.6 A College panel for examiner appointment was needed because these were College appointments. Members confirmed that the oversight of appointments would involve appropriate subject specific expertise, through Assistant Deans (subject areas), followed by confirmation by the College panel of Assistant Deans (research students).

6.7 Academic Board also discussed emerging Open Access requirements in which published academic research is expected to be made publicly available. In response to concern that this would be prohibitively costly because some academic journals charge to publish papers, it was confirmed that open access can be provided cost-effectively through institution repositories and that monographs are exempt from open access stipulations. For research council funded work, there are also research council funds available to support publication costs.

7 STUDENT EXPERIENCE & WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE
Received
7.1 The report of the Student Experience & Widening Participation Committee. (AB 2013 05)

Noted
7.2 SEWPC had been working to promote student recruitment and retention and to influence Government policy on part time and flexible study. The UUK’s report on part time provision: “The power of part time”, had been published and although it contained useful information on part time HE it did not make any recommendations on policy.

7.3 HEFCE had commissioned a study on supply and demand in part time HE, which Birkbeck would participate in.

8 TEACHING & QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
Received
8.1 The report of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (AB 2013 06)
Learning and Teaching Strategic Priorities for 2013-14 (AB 2013 07)

Agreed
8.2 A recommendation to publish External Examiner Reports to staff and students, together with information for External Examiners to make them aware that the reports would be published and to make a distinction between confirmation of appropriate academic standards and other issues the External Examiners wished to raise with Boards of Examiners.

8.3 New, amended, withdrawn and suspended programmes as noted in TQEC’s report. The Board also confirmed that appropriate arrangements had been made for existing students to complete programmes being discontinued.

8.4 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) arrangements enabling HND holders to top up to a Birkbeck degree.
8.5 International Programme Regulations: MSc and Postgraduate Diploma in Organisational Psychology

Noted

8.6 The Board asked for further evaluation of the proposal on APL, to evaluate uptake and student performance and to ensure equity of degree classification between students with APL and students who had studied all years of a programme.

8.7 Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee also reported its consideration of Learning and Teaching Strategic Priorities for 2013-14. The priorities centred on learner support including English language, study skills and making the transition to postgraduate study; student feedback; assessment; employability; three term learning; the new Centre for Transformative Practice and online provision.

9 FEES, BURSARIES & SCHOLARSHIPS COMMITTEE

Received and noted

9.1 The annual report of the Fees, Bursaries & Scholarships Committee for 2012-13 (AB 2013 08)

10 DEGREE AWARDING POWERS

Noted

10.1 Academic Board Executive Committee reported that the University of London had confirmed that Birkbeck could use its degree awarding powers and continue as a College of the University. The College had no immediate plans to use degree awarding powers but would consider doing so in future if partnership provision was developed.

11 EMERITUS TITLES

Noted

11.1 No staff eligible for emeritus appointments retired last session.

12 CHAIRS ACTIONS

Received and noted

12.1 A report on action taken by the Chair on behalf of the Board since the last meeting. (AB 2013 09)

13 DATES OF MEETINGS

To note dates of remaining meetings this session:

Wednesday 12 March 2014 at 2.00 pm
Tuesday 1 July 2014 at 2.00 pm