BIRKBECK COLLEGE
University of London

ACADEMIC BOARD

13 November 2014

Present

Professor David Latchman (Chair), Professor Matthew Innes, Professor Hilary Fraser, Professor Nicholas Keep, Professor Philip Powell, Professor Miriam Zukas, Professor Raymond Caldwell, Dr Patrizia Di Bello, Professor Zhu Hua, Dr Tim Markham, Professor Gerald Roberts, Dr Martin Shipway, Dr Anita Walsh, Dr Karen Wells, Professor Stephen Frosh, Professor Philip Dewe, Professor Sue Jackson, Ms Tricia King, Mr Robert Atkinson, Mrs Chiara Barontini, Dr Jennifer Baird, Dr Matthijs Van Den Bos, Dr Ben Fairbairn, Dr Julian Sims, Dr Eddy Davelaar, Zheng Chai, Reubs Walsh, Charles Michael-Berry, Dr Jasbir Gill, Dr Diane Horn, Dr Peter Wood, Professor Hilary Downes, Professor Trevor Fenner, Professor Fiona Macmillan, Professor Ron Smith

In Attendance

Mrs Katharine Bock, Mr Bob Westaway, Ms Rachael Boyle

1 MINUTES
Received and Confirmed
1.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board 1 July 2014

2 REPORT TO THE GOVERNORS
Noted
2.1 The report made to the Governors following the meeting of the Academic Board 1 July 2014. (AB 2014 01)

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP
Received and Confirmed
3.1 The terms of reference and scheme of membership for the Academic Board 2014-15 (X 2014 02)

4 MASTER’S REPORT
Noted
4.1 UCU had called action short of a strike in response to USS pension scheme issues. The issue was complex, involving the pension regulator, UUK, the USS Board and UCU at the national level; and College senior management and the local Union branch at the local level.
Discussions were ongoing with UCU on how the impact on Birkbeck students could be minimised. Birkbeck’s position would be to recognise that the dispute was on a national scale but maintain a local focus on minimising the impact on students.

It was noted that other Higher Education institutions were likely to exhibit a range of responses, for example, different percentages of pay deduction, performance based pay reductions or slower more stepped processes. The Master confirmed that at this moment it is not the intent of Birkbeck to dock any percentage of pay.

Communications to staff and students had been issued and would continue to be updated.

5 ACADEMIC BOARD GOVERNOR’S REPORT

Noted

5.1 As both of the Academic Board Staff Governors had sent their apologies the customary Academic Board Governor’s report was not delivered.

6 ACADEMIC BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Received and Confirmed

6.1 Members of ABExCo present confirmed the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board Executive Committee 5 November 2014, (AB 2014 03)

7 RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Received

7.1 The report of the Research Committee meeting of the 22 October 2014 (AB 2014 04)

Noted

7.2 In its last meeting the Research Committee and ABExCo had supported a proposal for the establishment of a new research centre; The Centre for Architecture, Space and Society, with guidance that the Centre extend its interdisciplinary dimensions.

Endorsed

7.3 The establishment of the Centre for Architecture, Space and Society as a new research centre.

Noted

7.4 A final draft of the Research Strategy 2014-19 was returned to Research Committee following a period of consultation with the Schools and members of the Academic Board. Feedback from this consultation has been overwhelmingly positive and has confirmed the Strategy’s value in capturing the College’s distinctive and highly valued research culture. The strategy would be relevant both within the College and in external publicity.

Endorsed


Noted

7.6 The Committee was informed that the results of the 2014 REF would be published on the 18 December 2014. However, Birkbeck would receive its own results,
under embargo, on the morning of the 16 December 2014. Details of the results would be cascaded through the REF Working Party, the Assistant Deans and the Executive Deans.

8 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE
Received
8.1 The Report of the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee meeting of 8 October 2014 (AB 2014 05)

Noted
8.2 The Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee is currently discussing the development of several key projects to develop and enhance student support, facilities and services and will draw these together into a student engagement strategy.

8.4 SEWPC heard about developments in mentoring schemes, the Careers service, projects resourced by the Alumni fund, the Birkbeck employment agency, student surveying and student representation.

8.5 With so many developments and opportunities in play, SEWPC’s remit and membership is changing. The Committee would keep its formal Terms of Reference and Scheme of Membership documents as well as the official title of the committee under review, and would come back with a formal proposal to Academic Board.

9 TEACHING AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
Received
9.1 The report of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee meeting of the 30 October 2014 (AB 2014 06)

Considered
9.2 A flexible learning discussion paper drafted by the Pro Vice Master for Learning and Teaching.

Noted
9.3 The paper was designed to bring together discussions on flexible learning from a Birkbeck perspective; it was not intended to be a policy paper. An open meeting would be called in December for all staff to discuss what is meant by flexible learning and teaching at Birkbeck.

Considered
9.4 A revised version of the Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement

9.5 The College’s Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE) had reached its mid-way point. The revisions in this version included additional objectives and extension of the end point of the strategy for a year, to 2017, to fit better with the schedule of external institutional quality review.
9.6 The aims of the strategy remain the same, though they now appear first in the strategy, followed by context. Some objectives have been modified for example relating to the work of the Centre for Transformative Practice in Teaching and Learning and to the increasing number of students on three year intensive degrees. The revised SLATE strategy also has a more enhanced ‘research led’ teaching focus.

9.7 The revised Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement.

9.8 Proposed new programmes and programme withdrawals.

9.9 Endorsed

Programme approval
- MSc Geochemistry
- BA Global Cinemas and Screen Arts
- BA Media & Culture
- BSc Economics
- BA Languages and/with International Law (2014/15)
- BA Languages and/with English Studies (2014/15)
- BA Theatre Studies and English (2014/15)
- BA Theatre and Drama studies (2014/15)

Programme withdrawal
- Cert HE Linguistics and Japanese
- PG Cert Career Management and Coaching
- MSc Medical Leadership (2 year route)
- FdSc Environmental Management (Stratford)
- MRes Comparative Capitalism
- MRes Public Administration
- PG Dip Management in the Public Sector
- PG Dip International Business
- PG Dip International Business and Development
- PG Dip Corporate Governance and Ethics
- BA Accounting and Management [6-year, part-time]
- BSc Accounting and Management with Finance (Decelerated)
- BSc Accounting with Finance (Decelerated)
- BSc Business [6-year, part-time, central London]
- Business [6-year, part-time, Stratford]
- Grad Cert People Management and Communication
- MA/MRes Modern Languages (Combined Languages Studies)
- MA/MRes Modern Languages (French Studies)
- MA/MRes Modern Languages (German Studies)
- PG Dip/Cert Modern Languages (Combined Languages Studies)
- PG Dip/Cert Modern Languages (French Studies)
- PG Dip/Cert Modern Languages (German Studies)

Note
9.10 The annual reports of the International Programmes courses for which Birkbeck acts as Lead College: Spanish, Philosophy and Organizational Psychology/Human Resource Management.

**Endorsed**

9.11 The approval of the regulations for international programmes in Organisational Psychology and Human Resource Management (available from [this link](#)).

**Noted**

9.12 The committee was informed that TQEC and ABExCo had considered and endorsed a proposal from the School of BEI to vary the Accredited Prior Learning requirements of the Common Award Scheme regulations (2.3g), in relation to a joint Masters degree in Business Psychology being developed with the Higher School of Economics (HSE), Moscow, to allow for a 50:50 split between modules taught at Birkbeck and modules taught at HSE.

**Endorsed**

9.13 The suspension of CAS regulation 2.3g for the MSc Business Psychology to allow for a 50:50 split between modules taught at Birkbeck and modules taught at the Higher School of Economics.

10 **FEES, BURSARIES AND SCHOLARSHIPS COMMITTEE**

**Received**

10.1 The Annual Report from the Fees, Bursaries and Scholarships Committee 2013-14 ([AB 2014 08](#))

**Noted**

10.2 FBSC had reviewed undergraduate financial support and approved a scheme with increased flexibility and the opportunity to offer incentives to groups of students less able to attend university. This extensive undergraduate support has had a positive impact on student recruitment, with a more diverse range of students now attending Birkbeck.

10.3 In contrast to the external focus of previous years, which was necessary to make sure the College was appropriately placed in the post 2012 fee and funding landscape, the College is now focussing more on internal issues and processes. There is a recognition that in some areas certain issues have fallen ‘through the cracks’ and not been properly addressed. Increased attention on communication with students and more definition in regards to the remits of different teams in the College would be the first step towards remedying this situation.

10.4 Not only is the pricing of Birkbeck programmes competitive but the interest free monthly instalment payment plans are unique in the higher education sector. By offering this benefit Birkbeck is taking on a large amount of risk in terms of potential debt, but is offering a better deal compared with competitor institutions who typically require payment up front or will break the payment into a maximum of 2-3 instalments, and only then on specific request. It was agreed that Birkbeck’s monthly instalment payment plan should have a more prominent place in marketing to potential students.
10.5 It was noted that other competitors offer what they market as ‘loans’. Members asked whether there were opportunities for students to claim tax relief on these loans. It was confirmed that there was currently no individual tax relief for tuition fees and that tax credits for corporations/institutions may apply in relation to staff development.

11 CHAIR’S ACTIONS
Noted and endorsed
11.1 The report on the actions taken by the Chair on behalf of the Academic Board since its last meeting, (AB 2014 09)

12 VISITING PROFESSOR APPOINTMENTS
Noted
12.1 The recent visiting Professor appointments (AB 2014 10)

13 EMERITUS TITLES
Noted
13.1 No proposals for the conferment of Emeritus titles have been received this year.

14 DATES OF THE NEXT MEETING
Noted
14.1 Tuesday 17 March 2015, at 2pm (subsequently rescheduled to Tuesday 3 March at 3pm)
Wednesday 17 June 2015, at 2pm