BIRKBECK
University of London

Minutes of the ACADEMIC BOARD

16 November 2011

Present
Prof David Latchman (Chair), Prof John Arnold, Prof Philip Dewe, Prof Hilary Downes, Prof Trevor Fenner, Prof Susan Jackson, Prof Nicholas Keep, Prof John Kelly, Prof Helen Lawton-Smith, Prof Mark Levene, Prof Deborah Mabbet, Prof Mike Oakesford, Prof Philip Powell, Prof William Rowe, Prof Ron Smith, Prof Li Wei, Prof Mary Wood, Prof Miriam Zukas, Dr Anthony Bale, Dr Belinda Brooks-Gordon, Dr Neil Conway, Dr Miranda Fricker, Dr Karen Hudson-Edwards, Dr Andreas Liefooghe, Dr Mpalive Msiska, Dr Gerald Roberts, Dr Linda Trenberth, Dr Matthew Weait, Dr Karen Wells, Ms Tricia King, Mr Philip Payne, Mr Robert Atkinson, Dr Alex Colas, Dr Jasbir Gill, Dr Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, Dr Richard C Rayne, Dr Mike Allen, Dr Frederick Anscombe, Dr Suzannah Biernoff, Dr Virginia Eatough, Dr Elena Loizidou, Dr Lisa McEntee-Atalianis, Dr Margarita Palacios, Dr Nicholas Pronger, Ms Kate Purcell, Dr Scott Rodgers, Dr Anton Schutz, Dr Katharine Thompson, Dr Vincent Tong, Dr Geoff Walters, Mr Sean Rillo Raczka

In Attendance
Mrs Katharine Bock, Mr Keith Harrison, Mr Dean Pateman, Mr Trevor Pearce, Ms Roisin Lynch, Mr David McGhie

Apologies for Absence
Apologies were received from twenty members

1 MEMBERSHIP OF THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Noted
1.1 The members of the Academic Board for 2011-12 and co-options for the 2011-12 session (AB 2011 01).

2 MINUTES
Confirmed
2.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 21 June 2011.

3 REPORT TO THE GOVERNORS
Noted
3.1 The Governors’ receipt of the Report of the Academic Board of 16 June 2011 (AB 2011 02)

4 MASTER’S REPORT AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF BIRKBECK
Received
4.1 The Master’s annual paper on the strategic direction of Birkbeck.
Noted
4.2 The Master updated members on progress since the paper had been circulated.

4.3 Birkbeck had risen three places in the Times Higher Education university rankings, becoming one of the top 150 universities worldwide.

4.4 An important gain had been made in the campaign to ensure fair treatment of part time provision in the new fee and funding system. Part time students would be required to pay back their loans in the April four years after starting studies rather than three years as originally proposed. For Birkbeck this would mean students would not be required to pay back until after graduation. This would allow the College to present a positive message about loans for part time study. This gain had followed debate at the Liberal Democrat conference and a proposed amendment to the Education Bill as it passed through the House of Lords.

4.5 The Master thanked Dr Belinda Brooks-Gordon for her work in raising this issue with the Liberal Democrats.

5 ABEXCO MINUTES
Confirmed
5.1 The Minutes of ABExCo’s meeting of 25 October 2011 (AB 2011 04), by the members of ABExCo attending Academic Board.

Endorsed
5.2 Amendment of the ABExCo Scheme of Membership to define a quorum of seven members, in keeping with standard College practice.

6 LEARNING AND TEACHING ACROSS THREE TERMS
Received
6.1 Proposals for the facilitation of learning and teaching across three terms (AB 2011 05).

6.2 These proposals followed discussion at the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee and the Academic Board Executive Committee. The aim of the proposals was to improve support for courses already teaching across all three terms, to learn from the experience of delivering these courses and to identify best practice.

6.3 A measured approach would be taken to implementation. There would be a pilot scheme in 2012-13 for programmes currently teaching three terms or planning to do so, followed by fuller, but voluntary, implementation in 2013-14 for course teams wishing to teach across three terms.

6.4 There were pedagogical benefits to the proposals, including the use of innovative intensive and flexible teaching patterns and bringing assessment closer to teaching. The three term option also made better use of space by increasing the use of College classrooms in the third term and reducing the need to hire space.

6.5 Initial student feedback had been in favour of the proposals. Students consultation would continue during the pilot scheme and implementation.

6.6 Members noted the need to plan carefully. It would be necessary to agree teaching patterns between departments in programmes with components from more than one department. It would also be important to ensure students were not overloaded and
had sufficient time to prepare for assessment. The incremental and pilot scheme based approach would allow for issues such as this to be identified and resolved.

**Endorsed**

6.7 The continuing development of support for teaching across three terms, to be implemented on a voluntary basis.

7 **WHITE PAPER: “STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF THE SYSTEM”**

Received

7.1 A proposed motion on the White Paper on Higher Education. *(AB 2011 06)*

Noted

7.3 Academic Board debated the proposed motion and several proposed amendments.

7.4 Members noted the autonomy of the Academic Board including its freedom to express views independently of the College.

7.6 Views were expressed that the policy was damaging to universities and students; that high fees would put off the poorest students; and that private sector involvement in Higher Education would be detrimental. Academic staff expressed their concerns about changing the educational culture towards consumerism and entitlement rather than one focused on education.

7.7 Members felt that it was important to demonstrate to students that the College was seeking to act in their interests. The Student Union stressed the importance of standing up for non traditional learners. It expressed worry about the potential disadvantages for students and staff if Higher Education became more of a business, and felt that it was necessary to take a strong stand against the white paper.

7.9 Support was expressed for the College's strategy of pragmatic engagement with, rather than opposition to, the Government. It was noted that pragmatic engagement had secured important gains for the College, improving the position for part time provision and non-traditional learners. To continue with this, it would be necessary to maintain a dialogue with the policymakers and implementers.

7.10 It was agreed, however, that a great deal of what was contained in the white paper was troubling, and that it would be beneficial to pause in its implementation.

7.12 Academic Board voted on the motion as it stood. 18 members voted in favour of the motion and 26 members voted against.

7.11 There was general agreement that any amendments to the motion should reflect the consensus view of the Board and be linked to Birkbeck specific issues including the concerns of part time students.

7.13 An amendment was proposed to add a statement calling on the government to recognise the significance of the part time sector and to create a framework for the higher education sector that supports the reality of diverse patterns of study. This was carried, with three votes against the amendment.

7.14 A second amendment was proposed, for the first paragraph of the motion to read “the Academic Board of Birkbeck College has no confidence in the policies expressed in the
The Academic Board then voted on the whole motion, incorporating the two agreed amendments. This was carried nem con:

The Academic Board of Birkbeck College has no confidence in the policies expressed in the Government’s White Paper on Higher Education.

We call on the government to pause its implementation of the White Paper, because it has the potential to inflict great and irreversible damage to Higher Education in the UK.

We further call on the Government:

To recognise fully the significant and growing contribution of the part-time sector, and to build on the momentum that has started to move part-time students from the margins to the mainstream;

And to work with the sector to create a framework that is fair, supporting student diversity but also, at its heart, flexible, seamlessly supporting the reality of diverse patterns of study, different paces of study, and different ages for study. In short to organise Higher Education for the future, dismantling the barriers to opportunity, progression and participation that remain from the past.

8 REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES
Approved

The following, which had been considered and recommended by the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee:

- In principle approval of the Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement
- Approval of terms and conditions for the issue of Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies
- Approval of revised Policy on Supervision of Dissertations by Taught Students
- Amendment of the date by which the College will publish undergraduate degree awards made to students for 2011/12 to 20 July 2012
- Approval of revised Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study relating to Compensated Fails
- Approval of the draft Institutional Audit Action Plan
- Approval of the regulations for 2012 for the MSc / PG Dip Organisational Psychology & Human Resource Management offered by the College for the University of London International Programmes.
8.2 The following, which had been considered and recommended by the Research Committee:

- Approval of procedures for checks to be undertaken within Schools on research grant applications.

- Approval of requirement to submit of one hard copy and one electronic copy of successful research degree theses to the College, 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.

- Approval of the Bloomsbury Colleges Studentships nomination procedure.

- Approval of Break in Study procedure for Research Students.

- Approval of amendment 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.

8.3 A paper entitled ‘Agenda for Student Experience Work’ from the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee outlining the four strands of student experience work for the 2011-12 academic year:

- 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

8.4 The annual report of the Fees, Bursaries and Scholarships Committee

9 **EMERITUS TITLES**

9.1 The conferral of the title of Emeritus Professor on Professor Michael Hunter, who has retired from the department of History, Classics and Archaeology in the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy.

**Emeritus Reader**

9.10 The conferral of the title of Emeritus Reader on Anne Jamieson, who has retired from the department of Social Policy and Education in the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy

10 **CRITERIA FOR ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS**

Noted
10.1 The Master as Chair of the Academic Board approved amendments recommended by TQEC and ABExCo, to amend the criteria for academic promotions to give greater clarity to the criteria for academic promotion regarding excellence in teaching.

10.2 Action taken by the Master as Chair of the Academic Board to approve the following Suspensions of Regulations:

**Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study**

- **MSc Financial Engineering**
  - Suspension of Regulation 5.2 to permit credit obtained more than five years ago to count towards the award

- **PhD / PGCE - HE**
  - Suspension of Regulation 4.2(a) to permit two students to register concurrently on a PhD and the PGCE – HE

- **Postgraduate Diploma in Computer Science**
  - Suspension of Regulation 27.3 to permit award of a Postgraduate Diploma to a candidate carrying a compensated fail mark

- **LLM Qualifying Law Degree**
  - Suspension of Regulation 24.4 to permit two students a third attempt to pass modules.

**Programme Regulations**

- **BA Film and Media**
  - Suspension of the requirement to complete all the compulsory modules for the award of the degree

- **MSc Finance**
  - Permission for a student to proceed with a compensated fail mark on a core module that has since been redesignated as a compulsory module.

**Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning policy**

- **CertHE Applied Psychology**
  - Permission for a student to be accredited 15 credits which were also counted towards a previous award of the CertHE Psychology

11 **DATES OF MEETINGS**

Noted

11.1 The dates of the meetings for the remainder of the session:

- Monday 27 February 2012 at 2.00pm
- Tuesday 19 June 2012 at 10.30am