BIRKBECK
University of London
Minutes of the ACADEMIC BOARD
1st July 2014

Present
Professor Philip Dewe (Chair), Dr Anita Walsh, Mr Bob Westaway, Mr Darren Shaw, Dr Dermot Hodson, Dr Richard Rayne, Dr Dionyssis Dimitrakopoulos, Ms Elizabeth Charles, Dr Kate McKenzie Davey, Professor Miriam Zukas, Professor Nicholas Keep, Mr Nick Stewart, Professor Philip Powell, Mr Robert Atkinson, Mrs Tricia King, Dr Eddy Davelaar, Dr Deborah Mabbett, Professor Hallvard Lillehammer, Professor Helen Lawton Smith, Professor Hilary Downes, Professor Ron Smith, Professor Sarah Hart, Professor Trevor Fenner, Professor Zhu Hua, Dr Rosie Cox.

In Attendance
Ms Katharine Bock, Mr Keith Harrison, Ms Rachael Boyle

25 MINUTES
Confirmed:
25.1 The minutes of the meeting of the 12 March 2014, (AB 2013 17).

26 REPORT TO GOVERNORS
Noted:
26.1 The report made to the Governors following the meeting on 12 March 2014, (AB 2013 18).

27 MATTERS ARISING
Noted:
27.1 Following the Board’s agreement to add two members of Teaching and Scholarship staff to the Scheme of Membership, advice would be taken on the mechanisms through which these new members would be selected.

28 MASTER’S REPORT
28.1 In the absence of the Master the customary Master’s Report was not delivered at this meeting.

29 GOVERNORS REPORT
Noted:
29.1 In the absence of the Academic Board Governors the customary Governors Report was not presented at the meeting. The Minutes of the Governors’ meeting are available here http://www.bbk.ac.uk/committees/committee-papers/active-committees-and-working-groups/governors/governors-papers/9-july-2014.

30 ACADEMIC BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Received and confirmed, by members of ABExCo present:
The minutes of the Academic Board Executive Committee meeting of 17 June 2014, (AB 2013 19).

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

Received:

31.1 The report of the Research Committee meeting of 27 May 2014, (AB 2013 20).

Noted:

31.2 Research Committee continued its rolling review of College research centres. This term it reviewed the Centre for Multilingual and Multicultural Research, the Centre for Interplanetary Science and the Birkbeck Institutes and found them all to be making active contributions to the College’s research.

31.3 HEFCE’s Open Access policy would be in force from April 2016. Research Committee was working to widen knowledge about the College’s institutional depository BiRON and to promote the culture of researchers depositing their work.

31.4 Research Committee was also overseeing the drafting of the Research Strategy 2014-19, [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/committees/abexcomm/20140617/researchstrategy](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/committees/abexcomm/20140617/researchstrategy). This document defined Birkbeck’s distinctive mission to combine the highest international standards of research and teaching with a commitment to reaching the widest possible student population. School Research Committees and departments would be invited to discuss the strategy before it was referred to Academic Board for formal approval in the autumn term 2014.

**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE**

Received:

32.1 The report of the Student Engagement & Widening Participation Committee meeting of 22 May 2014, (AB 2013 21).

Noted:

32.2 Work towards developing a new marketing strategy for the College was ongoing. The introduction of the 3 year undergraduate programme and the 1 year post graduate programme was attracting new types of student and the marketing strategy needed to adapt to this. The new marketing strategy would be a recalibration of messages to prospective students rather than a re-haul as the College still retained many students with distinctive Birkbeck characteristics, many combining their programmes of study with work and family commitments.

32.3 A new Birkbeck Briefing had been completed and distributed; written for a range of audiences including staff, students, alumni, Governors, donors, politicians and the media. It included a statement on the recent changes in government policy in relation to part-time education and Birkbeck’s successful response to these changes, introducing new intensive evening provision to enable it to remain a viable part-time education provider whilst other similar institutions were facing uncertain futures.

32.4 SEWPC was also considering the redevelopment of the Widening Access and Retention Strategy with work in five main themes: using data better, defining student engagement, developing systematised support to benefit large numbers of students, targeting students needing more intensive support and exploring the support needs of new types of students. The Strategy was linked to projects in Catalyst programme for intensive flexible provision,
including student attendance monitoring, research on student motivations, and mentoring and employability schemes.

33  **TEACHING AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE**

Received:

33.1 The report of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee meeting of the 20 May 2014, (AB 2013 22)

Noted:

33.2 Academic Board was informed of TQC’s discussion regarding the progress of the Catalyst programme, in particular projects to support students as they made the transition to higher levels of study, to improve learning and academic English support and to enable students to engage with learning throughout the year rather than only in term time. Academic Board also heard about the Catalyst online project, which was defining elements of teaching that could be delivered online as well as face to face and trialling recorded lecture availability through the virtual learning environment, facilitating the development of flexible blended learning courses.

33.3 Academic Board was pleased to hear that the response rate to the 2014 National Student Survey had passed the 50% threshold for validity and that the College successfully ran its own pre-finalist undergraduate survey and participated in the national Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey.

**Accredited Prior Learning**

Noted:

33.4 TQEC had been considering revisions to the regulations on Accredited Prior Learning (APL).

33.5 There had been a proposal to increase the maximum number of APL credits from 180 to 240 enabling students with Diploma qualifications to transfer into Birkbeck to complete a third year. Transfer of more than 180 credits was relevant and could be appropriate where there were articulated agreements with specified further education institutions. However, there was a higher risk where individual students were asking for their previous study to be accredited.

33.6 By allowing 240 APL credits, Birkbeck would be awarding qualifications based on only one year of study at the College, when usually qualifications were classified based on the outcome of courses in levels 5 and 6, taken over more than one year.

33.7 The current regulations provided for the acknowledgement of up to 240 APL credits in special circumstances on application by Programme Directors. The Board had endorsed a previous decision enabling applicants with HNDs to be allowed to claim 240 APL credits.

**Recommendations on programme approval and amendment**

**Approved:**

33.8 Academic Board approved the amendments to College programmes as recommended by the College Programmes Committee and endorsed by TQEC and ABExCo.

33.9 New programmes:

- MSc Biobusiness
- Cert HE Funeral Management
- MA Film Curating
Withdrawn Programmes:
- Cert HE Performance and Creative Practice
- Cert CE Performance Studies: Acting
- Cert CE Performance Studies: Concert Singing
- Cert CE Performance Studies: Dance
- Cert CE Performance Studies: Opera
- Modular Certificates in Music: Certificate, Cert HE, Certificate in Music and the Arts; Cert HE History of Music; Cert HE Opera Studies; Cert HE Musical Techniques and Composition; Cert HE Writing Music
- Graduate Certificate Islam: Politics and Society
- Graduate Certificate Islamic Studies
- PG Cert Professional Studies
- Graduate Diploma Biological Chemistry
- Graduate Diploma Molecular Biology
- MRes Management with Business Strategy and the Environment
- MRes Management with Business Innovation
- MRes Management with Corporate Governance and Business Ethics
- MRes Management with Creative Industries
- MRes Management with European Policy
- MRes Management with Human Resource Management
- MRes Management with International Business and Development
- MRes Management with International Business
- MRes Management with Marketing
- MRes Management with Sport Management
- MRes Social and Political Theory
- MA Creative Industries (Arts and Media)

Suspended Programmes:
- MA Modern Languages (Combined Languages Studies)
- Modern Languages (French Studies)
- Modern Languages (German Studies)
- PG Dip Modern Languages (French Studies)
- Modern Languages (German Studies)
- PG Cert Modern Languages (French Studies)
- Modern Languages (German Studies)
- Modern Languages (Combined Languages Studies)
- MRes Modern Languages (French Studies)
- Modern Languages (Combined Languages Studies)
- MA Modern Languages (PGCE) (Portuguese and Brazilian Studies)
- MA Modern Languages (PGCE) (Spanish and Latin American Studies)
- MA Modern Languages (PGCE) (French Studies)
- MA Modern Languages (PGCE) (German Studies)
- FD Archaeological Practice
- Foundation Degree Environmental Management (Stratford)
- MSc Comparative Capitalism

Amendments to the Common Award Scheme Regulations
Approved:
Amendment to the regulation for the classification of undergraduate degrees so that students who had taken more than 240 credits of level 5 or 6 modules had their best 240 credits counted towards the classification of the degree. Normally, students started their degrees with 120 credits of level 4 modules which did not count towards classification, but occasionally level 5 and 6 modules were taken instead.

Members noted the need to prevent students from taking excessive modules in order to obtain more than 360 credits thereby being able to choose the credits they would like to be discounted and so offsetting the risk of a lower classification.

Amendments to the Regulations on Reassessments

Approved:

Introduction of a requirement to cap reassessments at the pass mark, with a provision for programmes to request exemption on the basis of professional practice expectations. The Committee approved this amendment on the proviso that it would apply to all students, not just new cohorts and would be introduced in 2015-16.

Members noted that while TQEC had recommended the new rule should be applied to all students, ABExCo had recommended that it was applied to new students only. Having debated the matter, Academic Board reached the view that the differentiation between new and continuing students was not straightforward in Birkbeck’s flexible learning environment. Many students returned to study after a break or moved from one course to another.

Previously, when pass marks were raised from 30 to 40 points, the change was applied across the board. The Board agreed that provided there was clear communication on the change to all students, and sufficient notice, the reassessment cap should be applied across the board.

Under 18 policy

Approved:

The proposed revised under 18 policy was substantially finalised, with some discussion on operating it still taking place. Academic Board approved the revised policy in principle and delegated authority to approve the final version to its Chair.

The proposal allowed for students who would reach the age of 18 in their first year of study to have a designated member of staff (one in each department) as a personal tutor. The designated member of staff would undergo the necessary security clearance. For younger students an individual risk assessment, involving the parents or guardians, would be carried out in each case. It would also be necessary to take into account controls on access to the internet on college premises and for teachers of classes with students aged under 18 to be made aware, in relation to any group work and age restrictions on reading material and media clips used in teaching and learning materials.

Updated Admissions Policy

Approved:

Academic Board approved the updated admissions policy to include the updated under 18 policy upon its completion.

University of London International Programme Regulations

Approved:
33.18 Academic Board approved the Regulations for International Programmes in BA Spanish and Latin American Studies, BA Philosophy and BSc & Postgraduate Diplomas in Organizational Psychology and Human Resource Management, as endorsed by TQEC and ABExCo.

34 **COLLEGE BOARDS OF EXAMINERS 2012-13**

Received:

34.1 The report from the College Boards of Examiners in their work in 2012-13, *(AB 2013 24)*.

Noted:

34.2 Members drew attention to the recommendation of the College Boards that schools consider re-organising their postgraduate sub-boards to ensure greater efficiency and consistency. Implementation of this should produce positive results for the College.

35 **CHAIR’S ACTIONS**

Received and Noted:

35.1 The Report of the actions taken by the Chair on behalf of the Board, to suspend academic relations. *(AB 2013 25)*.

36 **AMENDMENTS TO SPRING TERM DATES**

Endorsed:

36.1 Academic Board endorsed the proposal that as a general rule the Spring Term should begin on the second Monday in January rather than the first, (except in years where Easter fell too early to fit the 11 week term in). It was agreed that this change should be implemented in 2016-17 as the dates for the 2014-15 spring term had already been published and Easter was very early in 2015-16.

Noted:

36.2 A later start to the spring term would help to facilitate any building work scheduled to take place over the Christmas break periods.

36.3 It was confirmed that a later January start should not have any impact on the Easter break or the timing of examination boards.

37 **DATES OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The dates of the 2014-15 meetings were noted:

- Thursday 13 November 2014, at 2pm
- Tuesday 17 March 2015, at 2pm
- Wednesday 17 June 2015, at 2pm