18.1 Governors heard a presentation on a project funded by HEFCE as part of the Catalyst programme that aimed to develop a statistical model that could predict dropout intention and actual dropout behaviour at Birkbeck.

18.2 The initial pilot project was based on a survey of students on one course, but it is now intended to roll the survey out to all students annually, by asking a third of the student body to complete it on a termly basis. Members noted that it would be useful if students who could participate in panel studies could be identified, with the same group of students being studied each year, and it was confirmed that the researchers would consider how to do this as the project develops.

18.3 Once factors associated with dropout intention and actual dropouts can be identified, targeted interventions can be considered. Indications from the first small-scale pilot were that one variable impacting intention to quit that could be targeted if it was found to hold true for a wider range of students is support for studying at Birkbeck from significant others (family and friends). Members were invited to contact the Vice Master with any suggestions for targeted interventions in this area.
18.4 Governors praised the project and noted that they would be interested to hear further reports on the research as it develops.

19 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS
19.1 Governors were asked to disclose in advance any actual or potential conflicts of interest in relation to the matters under discussion. No such conflicts were noted.

20 MINUTES
Confirmed
20.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 17 November 2016.

21 MASTER’S REPORT
21.1 The Master noted that since the last meeting there has been some positive political news for the College. It has been announced that eligibility for maintenance loans will be extended to part time students; the College is expecting this to have a positive impact not only on recruitment but also on retention, as it will make it easier for students to change from studying full time to part time if appropriate due to changes in their circumstances. Birkbeck has been lobbying for the removal of the distinction between full time and part time students, and this will help to move towards this. The change is not expected to come into effect until 2018-19. The College will therefore lobby for it to apply to all students once it is introduced, not only to new students.

21.2 The initial proposal on the introduction of postgraduate loans had indicated that they would only be available for students under the age of 30, which would clearly disadvantage many potential Birkbeck students. It has now been confirmed that these will be available to those under 60, and the College is lobbying the Government to ensure that they are promoted appropriately. Birkbeck will also continue to lobby for the continued expansion of the subject areas that are exempt from the rules on student support for those studying for Equivalent or Lower Qualifications (ELQ).

21.3 Members heard that there is a growing awareness in the Government that work is still needed on part time Higher Education, and that Birkbeck continues to build on its connections with those who can speak in Parliament in support of part time students.

22 PRO VICE MASTERS
Approved
22.1 The extension of Professor Philip Powell’s appointment as Pro Vice Master for Enterprise and Innovation for three years and an additional term, to bring the appointment in line with other Pro Vice Master terms of office which expire on 30 September.
Noted

22.2 The current Pro Vice Masters:
- Access and Community Partnerships: Dr Roz Dixon, to 30 September 2018
- Enterprise and Innovation: Professor Philip Powell, to 30 September 2019
- International: Professor Stephen Frosh, to 30 September 2018
- Learning and Teaching: Professor Sue Jackson, to 30 September 2016
- Research: Professor Julian Swann, to 30 September 2018

22.3 Professor Sue Jackson will be retiring at the end of the academic year, and a replacement for her PVM role will be appointed, using the process recently established with a role description, a call for expressions of interest from staff and a panel to shortlist, interview and advise the Master on the recommended appointment.

22.4 Governors also noted that Professor Miriam Zukas would be standing down as Executive Dean of the School of SSHP at the end of the academic year. This role would be advertised both externally and internally, and internal applications would be encouraged.

23 GOVERNORS STRATEGIC HORIZONS DISCUSSION

Received

23.1 A note on the outcomes of the Strategic Horizons meeting (G 2015 18)

Noted

23.2 Discussion at the meeting had focused in particular on the potential for increasing recruitment by exploring new areas and modes of provision, led by the College’s commitment to flexibility and meeting the needs of working students; and the importance of understanding the needs and desires of the student body, particularly around pastoral care, and taking action to improve retention and the student experience. Governors emphasised the importance of establishing priorities and timeframes for this recruitment and retention work, and taking action as soon as possible, noting that while Birkbeck was in a robust reserve position due to the work undertaken over the last few years, the College could not afford to be complacent.

23.3 It was agreed that the College would report back to the Governors on progress in the priority issues that had been identified.

24 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Received

24.1 The Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee (G 2015 19)
Noted

24.2 Income from tuition fees is currently forecast to end the year around £6 million below the budget target, exceeding the contingency of £3.175 million. Work is therefore taking place with budget managers to identify adjustments which will enable the College to achieve the target surplus of £5.5 million. Members noted that the College is facing a range of planning uncertainties over the coming months, including recruitment challenges; estates strategy projects including Cambridge House; and external factors including Government cuts, the Teaching Excellence Framework, and the possibility that Britain will leave the EU. Although Birkbeck has been financially prudent for many years, these uncertainties mean it is increasingly important to achieve the target surpluses.

24.3 F&GPC received a report on the management of tuition fee debt, noting that although the total income due from tuition fees is estimated to be higher than for 2014-15, the year end debt position is expected to be similar. The Committee noted that the work done by the Finance team to improve debt management processes continues to have a positive impact.

24.4 Members noted that 245 research grant applications were submitted in 2014-15, which was the highest ever number, but that the success rate of 22% was lower than last year, which had partly been caused by multiple applications to a very competitive fellowship scheme with a 5% success rate. The College is putting in place a more structured approach, aiming to ensure high quality bids with strategic co-ordination where appropriate, which should improve the success rate.

24.5 Governors heard that the Investment Committee has started to consider the development of a socially responsible investment policy, which is a complex issue that requires careful investigation. The Committee will continue to report to F&GPC on progress. The College would also consider the potential for borrowing as part of the funding package to support the estates strategy.

24.6 F&GPC reported that SPC is closely monitoring student recruitment. Applications for three year undergraduate degrees are down 22% compared with this point last year, but the drop in offers is lower at 9%. The number of offers made to applicants for part time undergraduate degrees, and part time and full time Masters degrees are all up on this time last year. Staff are making efforts to make offers as early as possible and measures have been put into place to improve application handling and offer making.

24.7 Members heard that a project board has been established to oversee the Cambridge House project, and that Mr Peter Zinkin has been asked to represent the Governors on this board.
24.8 F&GPC received the report of the Health and Safety Committee and asked the College to review the health and safety related aspects of the increasing numbers of younger students, and the College’s duty of care towards all its students. Governors heard that the College is also working on a general approach to safeguarding which includes the needs of other vulnerable students, the babies who participate in research in the Baby Lab, and those students who are under 18.

25 **AUDIT COMMITTEE**
Received
25.1 The Report of the Audit Committee (G 2015 20)

25.2 Governors noted the internal auditor’s report on Library systems and procedures and asked whether sufficient resources were devoted to the Library. It was noted that staff and students have access to several libraries very close to the College, and that it would be useful to raise awareness of the library resource available and how to access it.

26 **ACADEMIC BOARD**
Received
26.1 The Report of the Academic Board (G 2015 20)

Noted
26.2 Governors discussed the new Widening Participation Framework that is being developed, and the ‘three ticks’ process for defining widening participation students. Members heard that there will be a process of calibration to ensure that the College is using a definition of Widening Participation that is appropriate for Birkbeck students.

26.3 The Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (TQEC) is keeping the development of the Teaching Excellence Framework under review, including reviewing the metrics that may be included in TEF. Academic Board noted the risks to Birkbeck if some of the TEF metrics are taken without context and the need for the College to lobby to ensure appropriate contextualisation.

27 **EQUALITIES COMMITTEE**
Received
27.1 The annual report of the Equalities Committee (G 2015 21)

Noted
27.2 The Committee has agreed that in the future it will present a single integrated equality report that includes figures and narrative and brings together staff and student data. This will be brought annually to the Autumn term meeting of the Governors.
28 **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Received

28.1 The annual Report of the Safety Committee *(G 2015 22)*

29 **HR/PAYROLL AND FINANCE SYSTEM**

Noted

29.1 At the last meeting, Governors agreed to delegate authority for formal approval of the HR/Payroll and finance system replacement budget to the Chair and Deputy Chair of Governors, the Chair of F&GPC, the Chair of the Audit Committee, the Master and the College Secretary. The group convened by telephone on 28 January 2016 having considered a written report and proposal, and approved the procurement and implementation of a comprehensive, cloud-hosted, HR/Payroll/Finance solution, from Unit 4, at a total capital cost of £2.25M.

29.2 Progress will be overseen by the Audit Committee through the termly report received by the Committee on major projects.

30 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

Noted

30.1 No documents have been sealed since the last meeting of the Governors.

31 **MEETING DATES**

Noted

31.1 The date of the summer term meeting:

- Thursday 30 June 2016 at 5.00pm, followed by the annual Governors’ Dinner.