35 PRO-VICE-MASTER FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Noted

35.1 Governors noted a presentation from the Pro-Vice-Master for Learning and Teaching on her Portfolio, outlining both internal and external priorities. Internal priorities around Learning and Teaching have included the Student Achievement and Success strand of the HEFCE funded Catalyst programme, which aims to support full-time students who are undertaking evening study. Going forward, the aim is to develop work leading from and developing beyond the Catalyst programme, to support progression, retention and success at Level 4, equivalent to the first year of an undergraduate degree.

35.2 Other internal priorities include student satisfaction, as measured by the National Student Survey, and how we might develop in areas in which there is room for improvement such as assessment and feedback, learning resources and personal development. To support this work, the Centre for Transformative Practice in Learning and Teaching was launched in November 2013 with the aim of enhancing the student learning experience. Transformative learning and teaching involves not merely imparting knowledge to students, but collaborating with them to develop new perspectives and ways of understanding. Underpinning all of this is the Strategy
for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE), the implementation of which is considered by the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee on a regular basis.

35.3 Externally, Birkbeck is due for an institutional academic quality review, although it is unclear what form this will take as HEFCE’s contract with the Quality Assurance Agency is ending. It is likely the review will place a strong emphasis on institutional governance and governing bodies, academic standards and external examining, and data-driven evidence of improvement in learning and teaching. Another external priority is the high likelihood of a Teaching Excellence Framework. Members noted the College’s highly dedicated teaching staff, and the need to ensure that teaching is perceived to be valued in the same way as research.

36 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS
Noted
36.1 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.

37 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES
Confirmed
37.1 The Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body of 19 March 2015.

37.2 The Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Governors of 13 May 2015.

38 MATTERS ARISING
Noted
Cambridge House purchase
38.1 The College has purchased the property at Cambridge House after satisfactory completion of the due diligence process. The purchase involved acquiring the company that the seller had established to buy and sell the property, as this gave a larger range of options in relation to refurbishment and VAT. Governors thanked the team of College management and Governors who had worked long hours to accomplish this task. The Master will consider how to use the space to best support College strategy.

38.2 College management thanked Peter Zinkin for his significant contribution to the successful acquisition of the property.

39 MASTER’S REPORT
Noted
39.1 The Master reported that one of the College’s commitments as it approaches its 200th anniversary is to move towards all Birkbeck students being taught either in Birkbeck premises or in premises which are part of a formal sharing arrangement, reflecting the student survey results that indicate that students prefer to be taught in
Birkbeck space. In the short term, the Master has asked colleagues to point out teaching rooms which are not fit for purpose and are in need of upgrading; this may present an opportunity for fundraising. In the medium term the aim is the acquisition of properties (such as Cambridge House) and implementation of a series of moves which will enable the maximisation of teaching space within the core building. The long-term aim continues to be the development of a joint teaching and research facility on the site of the extension building. The Master would hold an internal event to discuss estates strategy with colleagues throughout the College, and the Governors will consider future approaches to property acquisition and the estate at their next Strategic Horizons meeting. Members noted the need to continue to consider how to make the best use of the College’s facilities in Stratford.

39.2 It was expected that significant Government funding cuts would be announced, and the College will be campaigning on the impact on part-time students in conjunction with the Open University, who are re-focusing their attention on their part-time core market.

40 BUDGET REPORT
Noted
40.1 A Report from the Finance and General Purposes Committee on budgets (G 2014 20)

40.2 Current forecasts indicate a surplus of £6.4M for 2014-15, an improvement on the budgeted surplus of £5.5M. However, despite this year’s positive performance, Governors noted that there are several potentially significant financial risks that may impact the College in the future. Income from student recruitment in a challenging and competitive market continues to be a major factor. Additionally, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has announced that they have been asked to find significant in-year savings and it is unknown at this point where these savings will be found within BIS’ remit and what impact this will have on individual HE institutions. College management were modelling possible scenarios. For 2016-17 and beyond, there might be further cuts in addition to increased staff costs due to changes to pensions and National Insurance contributions as well as the Comprehensive Spending Review. If tuition fees remained static and inflation increased, this would also have an impact.

40.3 Budget and financial forecast approvals would therefore be made on a provisional basis and it was very likely that Governors would need to review and possibly agree changes to the budget over the coming year, to maintain the agreed outcome of a surplus of 5% of income. If the College’s income was reduced by funding cuts or shortfalls against planned fee income, potential areas for spending reduction might include the College Innovation Fund and the School and Professional Services non-staff expenditure budgets, which had been regularly underspent over recent years.
Approved

40.4 The draft Budget for 2015-16, subject to the provisions for review set out in minute 40.3 above.

41 FINANCIAL FORECASTS
Approved

41.1 The updated five year financial forecasts for submission to HEFCE, subject to an increased emphasis in the commentary on the potential impact of any changes that might need to be made due to cuts; and the addition of a line in the commentary to emphasise that the increase in the ratio of staff costs to income was due to increases in NI and pension costs rather than overstaffing. (G 2014 21)

42 DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN
Considered

42.1 The draft Corporate Plan 2015-2020 (G 2014 22)

42.2 Governors considered and commented on the draft Corporate Plan document for 2015-2020, noting the importance of this document in pulling together various strands of the planning process. This is intended to be a dynamic, ‘living’ document, which will be considered again at the next Strategic Planning Committee meeting, and kept under ongoing review.

42.3 Members noted that strategic consideration should be given to the College’s status as a London-wide institution, including external engagement in other locations such as Tottenham, and most importantly its presence in Stratford.

42.4 Governors also discussed the Key Performance Indicators. Many of the KPIs emerged from the Strategic Horizons discussion, and this year more targets will be set as an outcome of that process, with consideration given to how realistic or aspirational these targets should be. It was noted that setting tougher targets might stimulate changes in behaviour and approach, even if they are not fully met. It was suggested that Governors may only need to consider the top-level KPIs, whereas the others may be more effectively engaged with at School level or Department level, or by other Committees. Consideration would also be given to individual School plans and how they feed into the KPIs.

42.5 The Pro-Vice-Master for Academic Partnerships will consider the role of the Stratford site and how it might be used to its full potential. The Head of Development and Alumni will consider the role of strategic philanthropy and fundraising in terms of achieving the College’s strategic aims, and will contribute to the evolving Corporate Plan document accordingly.
43 RISK MANAGEMENT

Received


43.2 The format of the risk register had been amended for 2015-16 to include the gross as well as the net risk score, giving a more realistic assessment of the risks for the coming year. Members discussed whether more could be done to manage risk for those items on the risk register which have a medium net score. It was reported that the Risk Management Group will continue to consider new ways to manage risk and enhance controls. The Audit Committee will also keep the management of high and medium risks under review and add extra controls if appropriate. It was noted that although the College should be managing all risks effectively, the nature of some of these risks was that they would still have a high net score.

Approved

43.3 The updated Risk Management Policy

43.4 The Annual Report on Internal Control and Risk

43.5 The Risk Register 2015-16

44 ACADEMIC BOARD

Received

44.1 The Report of the Academic Board (G 2014 24)

44.2 The Master drew Governors’ attention to the approved proposal that Sub-Boards of Examiners be given the ability to appeal against decisions of the College Board of Examiners, and that the Chair of the Academic Board, in consultation with the Academic Registrar, should have responsibility for deciding whether appeals should be heard.

44.3 Academic Board had also discussed the introduction of the Student Attendance Framework, which will be adopted as a pilot for 2015-16 to be reviewed at the end of the academic year. Although some members had argued against setting expectations for student attendance, the prevailing view was supportive and the student representative noted the opportunity to better support students at risk of dropping out.

45 AUDIT COMMITTEE

Received

45.1 The Report of the Audit Committee (G 2014 25)
45.2 The Audit Committee has been reviewing its own effectiveness, and the effectiveness of the internal and external auditors, and will continue to monitor this. The Audit Committee also continues to monitor the debt management situation closely, receiving regular reports from the Director of Finance.

45.3 Governors noted the Audit Committee’s thanks to Joy Manners for her service during her tenure as Chair, and added their thanks for her work as a Governor.

46 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Received
46.1 The Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee (G 2014 26)

46.2 Governors noted Investment Committee’s consideration of five-year cash flow forecasts showing a cash balance of £42.1m in July 2014 and £44.7m in July 2019. The forecast scenario modelled a 5% reduction in tuition fees, and included the likelihood of a significant capital purchase such as Cambridge House.

46.3 F&GPC confirmed the principle that the forthcoming 200th Anniversary fundraising campaign should be true to the College’s mission and ethos and have the student experience across the whole College as its core concern. The Executive Deans would encourage discussion of aspirations for the campaign in the Schools, and the Pro Vice Masters would hold meetings to encourage discussion in their portfolio areas.

46.4 The Governors noted that the outcome of a recent Procurement Maturity Assessment indicates a low score for the College, which was not unexpected as Birkbeck has no dedicated procurement resource. A detailed action plan has been provided, and a follow-up PMA will be undertaken in approximately 18 months.

Human Resources Strategy and Policy Committee
Approved
46.5 The Grading Review Procedure for Teaching and Scholarship Staff.

47 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE
Received
47.1 The Report of the Nominations Committee (G 2014 27)

Approved
47.2 The re-appointment of the following Governors for a term of office ending on 30 September 2018:
   - Mr John Biggs
   - Dr Ruth Thompson
Noted

47.3 As Mr Biggs had recently been elected as Mayor of Tower Hamlets he would be asked to consider whether the time commitments of this post would allow him to discharge his role as Governor.

Approved

47.4 The appointments of Mr Clive Birch and Mr Robert Allison to the Governing Body, to serve from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2018.

47.5 The appointments of Mr Harvey McGrath as Chair of Governors and Dr Ruth Thompson as Deputy Chair of Governors for 2015-16.

47.6 The re-appointment of Baroness Bakewell of Stockport as College President for 2015-16.

47.7 Appointments to the Fellowship of the College:
- Mrs Joy Manners
- Mr Daniel Peltz
- Professor Dorothy Porter
- Professor Sir Eric Thomas
- Hon Laura Wolfson Townsley

47.8 Appointments to Honorary Life Membership of the College:
- Dr David Havill, Lecturer, Department of Biological Sciences, who joined Birkbeck in 1974
- Ms Monica Law, Head of Marketing and Recruitment, External Relations, who joined Birkbeck in 1990
- Ms Naina Patel, former Director of Human Resources, who joined Birkbeck in 2005
- Mr Dean Pateman, former Academic Registrar, who joined Birkbeck in 2005
- Dr Luchu Wang, Laboratory Manager, Biological Sciences, who joined Birkbeck in 2001

Governors also agreed to authorise the Chair to appoint to Honorary Life Membership of the College any eligible member of staff whose retirement is announced before 30 September 2015.

Approved by all Governors present at the meeting

47.9 A proposal from the Students’ Union that Statute 5 be suspended exceptionally and for one year only, to allow one Student Governor to serve a three-year term. This will allow the two-year terms of the Student Governors to be staggered to provide better continuity of representation. The nominations and appointment procedure will remain the responsibility of the Students’ Union.
47.10 Members heard that since the last meeting of the Nominations Committee, Staff Governor elections have concluded, and noted the outcome as follows:

- Dr Eddie Bruce-Jones, School of Law, elected as Academic Staff Governor
- Dr Jennifer Fraser, Centre of Transformative Practice in Learning and Teaching, elected as Staff Governor
- Professor Sasha Roseneil, School of Social Science, History and Philosophy, elected as Academic Board Governor

47.11 Governors expressed their thanks to Mrs Joy Manners, Professor Julian Swann, Mr Richard Abbott and Dr Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, who had all reached the end of their terms, for their valuable work as Governors.

47.12 The terms of both student Governors had also come to an end, and members thanked them for their work. As confirmed in item 47.9 above, one of the Student Governors would be able to serve an extra year if the Students Union appointed them to do so.

Note: The SU subsequently confirmed that John Lindner would be appointed to serve an additional year.

48 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

48.1 Noted The Report of the Remuneration Committee (G2014 28)

49 EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

49.1 Received The Report of the Equalities Committee (G 2014 29)

49.2 Approved The annual Equality and Diversity report.

49.3 Noted Governors noted an update on progress on the actions from the Equality and Diversity report received last term; and asked for further clarification of some of the reported headlines in the progress report.

49.4 Governors heard that, as part of the wider review of equalities in the college, the Equalities Committee would be more firmly embedded in the governance and management structures of the College, via a reporting line to a College management committee such as the Human Resources Strategy and Policy Committee, and would consider both staff and student data.
50  HEALTH AND SAFETY
Noted
50.1 The Annual Report of the Safety Committee (G 2014 30)

51  NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2015-16
Approved
51.1 The membership of the Nominations Committee for 2015-16 (G 2014 31).
   Noted
51.2 The vacancies on the Committee will be considered after the election and appointment processes for Governors have been carried out and an updated proposed membership will be brought back to the Governors.

52  SEALING OF DOCUMENTS
Noted
52.1 No documents have been sealed since the last meeting.

53  MEETING DATES
Noted
53.1 Governors noted the dates for meetings of the Governors in 2015-16:
   • Tuesday 17 November 2015
   • Tuesday 15 March 2016
   • Thursday 30 June 2016