18 WELCOME TO NEW GOVERNOR
Noted
18.1 The Committee welcomed Stuart Popham to his first meeting as a Birkbeck Governor.

19 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS
Noted
19.1 Governors were asked to disclose in advance any actual or potential conflicts of interest in relation to the matters listed on this agenda. Sean Rillo Raczka noted that he was Vice-President Elect of the University of London Union.

20 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS
Confirmed
20.1 The minutes of the meeting of 13 December 2011.

21 MASTERS REPORT
Noted
21.1 The College was carefully monitoring applications to undergraduate programmes to judge the impact of the changes in tuition fees and student finance. Applications for UCAS-entry three year degree courses and from international students were up.
21.2 Applications for part time four year undergraduate courses were significantly down; however, for part time students it was still an early stage in the cycle. The majority of part time students made their applications in the summer.

21.3 Hits on the financial pages of the Birkbeck website were significantly up, indicating that prospective students were seeking information on fees and finances. There was a high level of public misconception about part time fees, and Birkbeck had therefore launched the 'Our Promise to You' campaign to simplify, as much as possible, information on part time finance for prospective students.

21.4 The College was also about to launch a campaign targeted to national HE bodies, highlighting the lack of information available for part time students.

21.5 The Student Loans Company (SLC) was not yet in a position to give accurate financial information to part time students. Birkbeck continued to suggest to SLC ways in which the situation could be improved enabling SLC staff to be more familiar with the rules on part time students. The Academic Registrar was a member of a working group within the SLC and in a position to advocate for part time issues.

21.6 Governors were concerned that the SLC would not be able to process part time loan applications promptly and correctly and that this would have a significant impact on the College's cashflow. They were reassured that the College's cash holdings and the large surplus retained in 2011-12 would allow Birkbeck to be prepared for this eventuality.

21.7 Governors asked if maintenance grants would also be delayed and heard that part time students did not qualify for maintenance grants. It was noted that this was another example of how the playing field was not equal between part time and full time students.

21.8 Schools were being encouraged to make as many offers as possible as quickly as possible. The proportion of applicants made offers had increased compared with previous years. It was noted that it was especially important to make offers quickly at the Masters level, as there was more competition from other institutions.

21.9 Governors had noted at the last meeting the need to monitor the demographic distribution of students applying for 2012-13, in case the new system was deterring students from particular socioeconomic groups. So far, it appeared that applications from students living in lower income postcodes had increased slightly.

21.10 If the current downturn in undergraduate applications of c.30% continued, the financial scenario models that had been considered by Audit Committee and Finance and General Purposes Committee indicated that the College could avoid falling into deficit.

22 HEFCE FUNDING
Received
22.1 HEFCE's notification of the College's allocation of funding for 2012-13 (G 2011 18)
Noted
22.2 The allocation was more than expected because the special allocations had not been cut in the same way that core funding had been, because London Weighting had been retained and because improvements in student retention meant that there were more "old system" continuing students in the College compared with previous forecasts. The outcome was better by some £2M than the assumptions used in the financial scenario models.

22.3 There was a possibility that the part time premium funding would be withdrawn. This issue was out to consultation, and the Master was seeking a meeting with Alan Langlands, the Chief Executive of HEFCE, to discuss it. He was also chairing a group of London Higher institutions with an interest in part time provision, in order to lobby on this issue.

22.4 It was confirmed that future HEFCE research funding would be allocated only for research rated as world leading and internationally excellent (4* and 3*) in the 2012 Research Excellence Framework (REF). This would be very relevant for the College’s preparations for its Research Excellence Framework return.

22.5 The allocation was provisional, and there would be two more iterations, the first in March 2013 and the second in 2014 based on actual student numbers.

23 **NEXT STEPS FOR BIRKBECK**

Received

23.1 A note on progress in implementing the Next Steps for Birkbeck projects (G 2011 19)

Noted

23.2 These projects were preparing the infrastructure for dealing with the new fee and funding system.

23.3 Governors noted that the Enrolment 2.0 project, bringing in online enrolment for all, would be crucial, and that its progress should be closely monitored.

23.4 The three term learning project was designed to facilitate learning and teaching across all three terms, for programme teams that wished to use this pattern. A pilot scheme would run in 2012-13. Three term learning was already used for Masters programmes in some departments; the new project would extend to undergraduate programmes, which would have an impact on administration and teaching. Some undergraduate programmes in Management, for example, would introduce three exam periods. As much as possible, teaching would be reconfigured so that staff would teach mainly in two terms and have a third term with a lighter load.

23.5 Governors asked about the criteria for assessing the outcome of the pilot and heard that it would be evaluated on the basis of how well it worked for students, as well as whether it worked in terms of space and using the estate.

23.6 Some departments would find it harder to re-organise their courses than others, because of variations in the structure of courses. One objective of the pilot would be to find out if it was operationally possible to run a "mixed economy" of two and three term learning.
23.7 It was noted that students were generally positive about the idea of three term learning. The Students' Union representative noted that students who were parents found it especially difficult when all their exams were in July.

23.8 Schools were continuing to review their Certificate of HE provision. A significant portion of this provision was geared to people pursuing lifelong learning, maintaining a long standing commitment at Birkbeck. It was necessary to work out how this provision could be successful in the new system, and how it would work both financially and pedagogically.

23.9 Under the new fee and finance regime the requirement for lifelong learning students to take exams, in order to secure HEFCE funding for the courses, would no longer be relevant. In the new system there would be no need for students with no interest in gaining specific qualifications to take exams.

23.10 Other Certificates of HE were used to provide a pathway onto degree courses or for professional qualifications and would be developed accordingly.

24 BIRKBECK STRATFORD

24.1 An update on progress in the building project and teaching programme at Stratford. (G 2011 20)

24.2 Good progress was being made on all fronts: the governance and management structure for the building project was in place; the construction programme had started and was on schedule to finish on time; fundraising work was ongoing; the academic programme for 2013-14 was being developed; and work on widening access and retention was continuing.

24.3 Independent Governor Peter Zinkin had viewed the site. It was reported that the site appeared to be run efficiently and that the logistics appeared to be under control.

24.4 Since 2006-07 when the College started to focus on building recognition of Birkbeck in east London, there had been a 107% increase in students from East London postcodes coming to study at Birkbeck in Bloomsbury.

24.5 University College London had announced plans to build a campus in East London. It was reported that given that the academic focus of the campus was likely to be science and technology, there would not be significant competition in terms of teaching.

24.6 The student Governor noted concerns that the development of the UCL site would lead to a loss of homes in the area and the absence of social or educational engagement by UCL in the area. Birkbeck had carried out substantial community outreach in East London.
25  **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Received

25.1 The Report of the Audit Committee *(G 2011 21)*

Noted

25.2 The Audit Committee had been concerned about the Students' Union's (SU) financial management, and had learned at the last meeting that the SU was insolvent and in debt to the College.

25.3 After meeting with the SU Trustees and Managers, the Audit Committee had reached the view that there had been a complete failure of governance and management in the SU.

25.4 College management's view was that, while it supported the future of a Union with representative and advocacy functions, it could not continue to fund the union on the basis of the status quo. The College would work with the SU to restructure its activities. This would involve the transfer of operations from the SU to the College, including among other things the shop and the student counselling service. The SU would focus on core activities, including advice, representation and advocacy.

25.5 Governors noted their support of the College's approach to this issue. The Student Union representative, not speaking on behalf of the Trustees, expressed the view that the SU should concentrate on representation and advocacy rather than commercial activities.

Approved

25.6 Audit Committee's recommendation to delegate authority for use of the College Seal to the Chair of Governors, Master and College Secretary, with a requirement that a report on the use of the Seal is made to each meeting of the Governors.

26  **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Received

26.1 The Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee *(G 2011 22)*

Noted

Forecast budget out-turn 2011-12

26.2 The forecast surplus had increased from £1.938M as reported last term to £2.5M. The improvement was due to a reduction in School pay spending estimates, allowing the School pay contingency to be released, and a reduction in indirect Professional Services cost estimates. This was good news, but there was still a need to control spending commitments. The College had various financial commitments to uphold, and a need for safeguards against an uncertain future.

Financial scenario models

26.3 Financial scenario models had been developed for planning purposes. They were based on 2011-12 student numbers, with no undergraduate ELQ intake and percentage drops in undergraduate intake. Current applications for 2012-13 indicated that the real situation was closest to Scenario 1, with an overall 35 percent drop in undergraduate intake. According to the model this would be financially manageable for the College provided other income streams from international and
postgraduate recruitment were maintained. Scenario 1 would therefore be the basis for planning in the next financial year.

**Student financial support**

26.4 Strategic Planning Committee had reported the introduction of a new Hardship Fund which would provide additional year-round discretionary funding for undergraduate and postgraduate students experiencing unforeseen changes in their financial circumstances and who had exhausted alternative possibilities for funding. This was welcomed by the student Governor.

**Estates matters**

26.5 Estates Committee had reported that SOAS' bid to acquire and redevelop Senate House North Block as a teaching and learning space, in which Birkbeck was a partner, had been successful. SOAS and Birkbeck had agreed that Birkbeck would have exclusive use of the space in the evenings and input into designing the facility. The bid had been supported because it was a partnership between Colleges. Governors were pleased to note that having more learning and teaching space nearby would enhance students' experience of being in a cohesive academic community.

26.6 Discussions had commenced with Friends' house on Euston Road on involvement in the refurbishment of their large lecture theatre space, which was currently hired for use by the School of Law. This would involve a potential financial contribution in exchange for input to the design and guaranteed use. Input to design would include proposals to improve accessibility.

26.7 Governors asked about the potential to use other buildings in Bloomsbury that were empty during the evenings. There had been feedback from some venues that students using external space did not feel they were not part of the Birkbeck community. Future strategy would be to secure shared space meeting Birkbeck student needs and with shared convertible signage including the Birkbeck identity.

26.8 The College was preparing to commission a master planning exercise, potentially in partnership with Amity University, to examine the potential for expanding teaching space in Bloomsbury. A due diligence process was under way. It was confirmed that there was currently nothing in Amity's teaching programme that would conflict or compete with Birkbeck's.

26.9 Progress in managing the impact of the Olympic Games was reported. In July and August 2012 the College would be next to the Olympics media hub in Russell Square. This would not cut off the College buildings, but would make access more challenging. Schools and central services were making and sharing plans to address the expected disruption. The College was planning for most services to be available, rescheduling deliveries and events and making provision for off-site access to systems and networks.

**HR matters**

26.10 The HR Strategy and Policy Committee and F&GPC had recommended the introduction of a new Study Assistance scheme for staff wishing to study at Birkbeck. This would replace the Remission of Course Fees scheme. The new scheme took
into account the changes in university funding, tuition fees and part time student loans being introduced in 2012-13.

26.11 The previous Remission of Course Fees scheme had been based on full fee remission from a finite budget allocation, on a first come, first served basis. Staff already studying under the previous scheme would continue to be supported under its terms until the completion of their current course of study.

26.12 The new Study Assistance scheme would support study for part-time credit bearing modules at Birkbeck, including Certificates of Higher Education and undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees and diplomas.

26.13 The scheme would consist of a College contribution of 50% of the tuition fee and a personal contribution of 5%. Eligible staff could ask their Schools or Departments to pay the remaining 45% of the fee or apply for government student loans.

26.14 The Study Assistance scheme was intended as a staff benefit, supporting the attraction, development and retention of good staff. In developing the new scheme, consultation had taken place with staff groups, as had benchmarking against other universities' schemes (particularly London based universities).

26.15 Governors asked why the scheme had changed from 100% remission to a 50% College contribution. It was reported that the intention was not to cut the scheme, but to identify a way to resource it that would replace the dramatic drop in per-student HEFCE T funding in the new system. In the new Scheme places would not be limited, bringing the potential for more staff to benefit.

26.16 Governors discussed the new scheme. They noted that staff perceived such schemes as beneficial even if they did not personally participate, although there were also equality issues in running a staff scheme that not all staff could use. They also noted the need to be sensitive to the more general feeling in the public and university sector that employment benefits, such as pension schemes, were diminishing.

26.17 The scheme would be closely monitored and a review would take place after the first year. Governors asked for the review report to include more details on how the scheme compared with those of other HE institutions.

**Approved**

26.18 The new Study Assistance Scheme, subject to a review after its first year of operation.

**Noted.**

26.19 Three Governors voted against approving the scheme.

**27 ACADEMIC BOARD**

Received

27.1 The Report of the Academic Board *(G 2011 23)*

**Noted**
27.2 Academic Board recommended that Governors approve the Code of Practice on Free Speech (G 2011 23 Appendix A)

27.3 The Student Governors acknowledged the necessity of a code of free speech, but asked for the Code to acknowledge the need to protect students from discriminatory speech. They also had concerns over the section of the code which required 'good order' at events.

27.4 Higher Education institutions were required by legislation to have a Code of Practice on Free Speech in place. Governors noted the importance of free speech in an academic community; but also noted the need to protect the reputation of the College. There was support for a streamlined document, and for taking legal advice on its content before publishing.

Agreed
27.5 To circulate comments on the document by email and for a redrafted document, taking these comments into account, to be referred to the College’s legal advisers before being re-presented to Governors.

Approved
27.6 The appointment of Mary Wood as Emeritus Professor.

28 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Received
28.1 The Annual Report of the Safety Committee (G 2011 24)

Noted
28.2 Governors asked if there were any Health and Safety implications for the upcoming Olympic Games. It was reported that the College met regularly with the police in order to be kept up to date on security matters. Birkbeck was working with its neighbouring Colleges, including the Bloomsbury Colleges, to share plans for dealing with disruptions.

28.3 Members asked about the report of five non-drill fire alarm evacuations due to malicious acts in 2011, which was much higher than in preceding years. The Health and Safety Officer noted that it was more unusual that the numbers had been so low in previous years. The category of 'malicious acts' included occasions on which the alarm had been set off by accident but not reported.

28.4 Governors asked whether Birkbeck Stratford was included in this report and heard that there were currently separate arrangements for Stratford, including a safety coordinator on the University of East London site. Health and Safety at the new building was the responsibility of the contractor until the building was handed over.

29 EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

Considered
29.1 The Report of the Equalities Committee (G 2011 25)

Noted
29.2 A correction to section 4.4 of the Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2010-11 (Part 1). The UK Black Pride LGBT event was hosted at Torrington Square, Birkbeck by the Students' Union rather than by the LGBT Students' Union Group.

29.4 Governors asked what steps the College was taking to support employment of disabled people. It was reported that the College were members of the Department for Work and Pensions’ 'Two Ticks' scheme and through this had made commitments on disability including on recruitment, training, retention, consultation and disability awareness.

Approved

29.5 The Annual Equality and Diversity Report

29.6 The Equality and Diversity Objectives 2012-2016

30 PRAYER ROOM

Noted

30.1 It was reported that the College had received a petition for a prayer room to be provided in the College.

30.2 As with any request for space, this would need to be considered by the College Estates Committee. Governors therefore asked College management to refer the request to the Estates Committee.

31 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

Resolved

31.1 That authority be granted to affix the Common Seal of the College to any deeds or documents necessary to give effect to the resolutions of the Governing Body at its present meeting.

32 MEETING DATES

Noted

32.1 The date of the summer term meeting:

- Tuesday 3 July 2012