Minutes 6 October 2010

Summary
These are the minutes of the meeting of 6 October 2010

Recommended action
The Committee is asked to confirm these minutes.

Chris Terrey
December 2010
Minutes of the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee
6 October 2010

Present:

Mrs T King (Chair)
Mr N Buckle
Professor R Caldwell
Dr F Candlin
Dr M Cook
Ms P Crampton
Mrs A Dierks
Mr K Harrison
Professor S Jackson
Ms A Jamieson
Ms C McDonald
Dr J Nicklin
Mr D Pateman
Mr P Payne
Mr M Pimm
Mr A Schmidt
Dr M Weait

In attendance:

Mr T Pearce
Mr A Punaks
Ms C Terrey

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCHEME OF MEMBERSHIP

1.1 Confirmed:
The Terms of Reference and Scheme of Membership, together with details of
membership for 2010-2011.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2010

2.1 Confirmed:
The minutes of the meeting of 12 May 2010.
3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1 Noted:
No matters arising that did not appear elsewhere on the agenda.

4 REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

4.1 Noted:
Receipt by the Academic Board Executive Committee on 16 June of the Report of this Committee following its meeting on 12 May.

4.2 The QAA had commended My Birkbeck Services as one of the three areas of best practice.

4.3 Endorsed:
The Widening Participation Strategic Assessment and the Retention Strategy.

4.4 Approved:
Governors at its meeting on 1 July approved the Widening Participation Strategy Assessment, for submission to the Higher Education Funding Council.

5 CHAIR'S REPORT

5.1 Reported:
Following a meeting with the Assistant Deans (Recruitment and Retention), it had been agreed the Committee would do its work through small, short life, focussed working groups that would deliver the projects agreed by the Committee. The meetings of the Committee would therefore be shorter.

5.2 The retention strategy had now been agreed by the College committees. It was already beginning to play an important role throughout the College, and was an important part of the teaching and learning agenda.

6 RETENTION STRATEGY

6.1 Noted:
The College’s retention strategy would be delivered by a Steering Group, that had held its first meeting. The Steering Group was co-chaired by the Pro-Vice-Masters for the Student Experience and Teaching and Learning.

6.2 The Committee received a paper that outlined the five projects that would deliver the Strategy. Following the Steering Group meeting, the terms of reference and membership of each project would be updated.

6.3 The Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee sponsored two of the projects: Transition to Higher Education and Mentoring and Buddying, being
piloted in the School of Law. The Committee would receive regular reports on these projects.

6.4 This Committee and the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee sponsored two of the projects, and would help develop sharing good practice.

6.5 To ensure good communication, the five separate projects, having been discussed at appropriate committees, would report as a collective to Strategic Planning Committee (via the steering Group) and Academic Board Executive Committee and Governors (via the Student Experience and Widening Participation and the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committees).

6.6 Noted:

6.6.1 A report on the Transition to Higher Education project. A Getting Ready to Study pilot programme had been offered in June for October starters.

6.6.2 £50k had been awarded by JISC to develop the My Birkbeck website further to support the pre-entry programme.

6.6.3 An orientation programme would be offered to late enrollers.

6.6.4 Two further initiatives being considered were drop-in sessions for students considering discontinuing, and an end-of-first-term programme addressing any student concerns.

6.7 A report on the Mentoring project. The mentoring scheme aimed to improve retention of first year students and a pilot scheme was being offered in Law. Challenges to be addressed: how to make the scheme generally available across the College when there were late enrollers, and how to control numbers of mentors being requested, which otherwise may lead to expectations not being met.

6.7.1 Group mentoring may be offered.

6.7.2 An impact assessment would be carried out on the schemes, considering equality and diversity.

6.8 Members of the Committee interested in joining the two projects should contact either the Head of My Birkbeck Services (Transition to Higher Education) or the Assistant Dean for Recruitment and Retention, Law, (Mentoring project).

7 ALUMNI FUND

7.1 Noted:
The Alumni Fund raised c£100,000 per annum. In 2009-2010 c£75,000 had supported the setting up of the My Birkbeck student services. In future, in
agreement with the wishes of the donors, Alumni Fund money would be used to support the student experience.

7.2 Agreed:
A disbursement report would be made annually to the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee. External Relations would assist schools develop a relationship with their alumni.

8 WIDENING PARTICIPATION STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT (WPSA)

8.1 Noted:
Governors had approved the WPSA and it had now been submitted to the Higher Education Funding Council.

8.2 The targets would be reported against annually for the next three years. HEFCE had not yet delivered an evaluation template for HEIs to use as part of their annual reporting.

8.3 Agreed:
A working group would be set up to help develop cross-college work on Widening Participation to support College objectives and the delivery of the WPSA. It would look at whether the current Widening Participation Strategy for the College needed to be refreshed.

8.4 The Head of Outreach and Widening Participation would invite membership to the group. The group would initially confirm terms of reference and would then work on implementation.

9 REPORTS FROM CENTRAL SERVICES

9.1 Noted:
A report from My Birkbeck Student Services.

9.1.1 The website was being further developed in the light of research on usage. The Student Services Forum was proving useful.

9.1.2 Useful feedback had been obtained from students attending the My Birkbeck Student Orientation. Most respondents had been postgraduates.

9.1.3 The Teaching space group would need to consider how best to match room capacity with size of classes.

9.2 Noted:
A report from the Outreach and Widening Participation Unit.
9.2.1 The development of the WPSA and the Retention Strategy gave the Unit a clear understanding of what the College was committed to regarding student access and retention.

10 ONLINE RECRUITMENT

Noted:
10.1 Online recruitment was the College’s main recruitment technique, and support would be offered to students who were not comfortable enrolling online.

11 FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AT PRE-ENROLMENT STAGE

11.1 Discussed:
Engaging family involvement in the transition plan at the pre-enrolment stage – both the families of mature learners and the parents of UCAS students.

12 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Noted:
The dates of the next meetings of the Committee: 12 January and 4 May 2011.