1. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Received:
1.1 Membership and Terms of Reference of the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee (SEWPC 2013 01).

Noted:
1.2 The Chair was developing proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference to enable the committee to deal with student recruitment and retention and HE policy change.

1.3 It was confirmed that the expanding of the Terms or Reference would not result in any lack of focus on student experience and widening participation, but was intended to generate a more holistic approach.

Agreed:
1.4 To revise and update the Terms of Reference in advance of the next meeting, where further discussions will take place.

ACTION: To produce a revised and updated scheme of membership and terms of reference for SEWPC.

2. MINUTES
Received:
2.1 The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of 7 May 2013.

Agreed:
2.2 To confirm the minutes of the meeting of 7 May 2013.

3. MATTERS ARISING
3.1 There were no matters arising.

4. REPORT
Received and noted:
4.1 The Committee’s report to Academic Board of its meeting 7 May 2013 (SEWPC 2013 02)

5. CHAIR’S REPORT
Reported by the Chair:
5.1 That SEWPC would be a conduit for reporting issues concerning government, policy and institutions through to the Academic Board Executive Committee. It was proposed that government relations should therefore become a permanent agenda item for SEWPC. This was preceded by an update on Birkbeck’s relations with the current government.

5.2 That there was much to be pleased about following confirmation of the College’s financial performance in 2012-13 and the good student recruitment figures for 2013-14.

5.3 That the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) had recently published a report which suggested Part-Time Higher Education is crucial to future of UK economy, and that UCAS have published a new front-end to their website which signposts Part-Time education for students. Furthermore, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) have included Part-Time data in their report for the first time this year, and sought assistance from the College to understand the data, which represented a considerable step forward.

5.4 That the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) had included the Part-Time issue in their latest report, while HEFCE have just commissioned a major piece of research on Part-Time study, and are due to visit Birkbeck in November, presenting an opportunity for the College.

5.5 It was agreed that the chair would circulate the aforementioned reports to the committee.

5.6 The Chair therefore concluded that although a policy change by the government can’t be expected until the next general election, there is at least a clear sense of momentum. A pledge was made to continue evaluating the College’s position vis-à-vis policy, and that this would be incorporated into the work of the committee in the future.

Noted:
5.7 The committee sought clarity on what the goals of the government lobbying exercise were. The Chair confirmed that in this regard, it is primarily the desire of the College to see a return of the Part-Time premium, and a lifting of the ELQ policy.

ACTION: Reports by external institutions concerning Part-Time study to be circulated to the committee.

5. WIDENING ACCESS STRATEGY
Received and noted:
5.1 Development of a College Widening Access Strategy 2014-18 (SEWPC 2013 03)
Reported by Caroline McDonald, Head of Widening Access and Retention:

5.2 That the Widening Access Strategy was a formal document designed to strategise the operations of the Widening Access team, which would build in the framework from the college’s OFFA agreement.

5.3 That the timing of the publication of the strategy was good, as the College’s Retention Strategy was also being reviewed, and both documents would feed into the OFFA agreement.

Noted by the Chair:

5.4 That Patricia Crampton (HR Manager Equalities) would be involved in the Widening Access group as outlined in SEWPC 2013 03 for consultation of the strategy.

5.5 That the expanded Terms of Reference of the SEWPC would formalise a commitment to embed the Widening Access Strategy effectively in operational areas across the College.

5.6 That the committee needed to examine ways of quantifying widening access for data purposes, and also ways of measuring the quality of the student experience for students from a widening access background.

6. **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY**

Received:

6.1 A report on the results of the National Student Survey 2012-13 (SEWPC 2013 04)

Noted:

6.2 That NSS results will become increasingly important for the university’s reputation if the numbers of full-time undergraduates at the university continue to rise, as the data is used for a number of league tables that are published nationally.

6.3 That the NSS results ranked Birkbeck lower than last year, and that the College was now ranked third in London for student experience.

6.4 That the committee needed to focus on improving the results for this year as the data is used for a number of important measures that are used by prospective applicants.

6.5 That the committee would focus on some targeted initiatives to boost scores in the forthcoming year.

6.6 That the Communications team will write to all final year students in December with evidence of what the College has done in response to feedback.

6.7 That expectation management should influence thinking in the committee regarding the improvement of NSS results. It was suggested that students arriving at the university aged 18 will have different expectations of feedback on written work, and that currently academic staff don’t reflect critically on how feedback can affect NSS results.

6.8 It was suggested that students could be surveyed every year to prepare them for the NSS survey, and give the College a chance to rectify issues for each cohort.

Agreed:

6.9 That a group comprised of members of the committee will meet to reflect on this before the next meeting of TQEC.

7. **STUDENT CHARTER**

Received:
7.1 Student Charter **(SEWPC 2013 05)**

Reported by Tony Ferns, Information and Policy Compliance Manager:

7.2 That consultation has been carried out across the College over the development of the Student Charter, which is designed to formalise the link between the College, the Students’ Union, and the students.

7.3 That committee members are invited to comment on the Student Charter in advance of the next meeting, and suggest ways in which it could be used.

**Noted:**

7.4 That the committee welcomed the charter but were keen to ensure it does not resemble a contract.

7.5 That the Student Charter should be universal, and not be open for amendment at the School and Departmental level.

**Agreed:**

7.6 That a draft will be circulated for consultation in advance of the Spring meeting, before sign-off ready for 2014/2015 term. The draft will be circulated as widely as possible, including to Assistant Deans.

8. **RETENTION STRATEGY**

**Received:**

8.1 Retention Strategy Development **(SEWPC 2013 06)**

**Noted:**

8.2 That retention statistics from **SEWPC 2013 06** revealed an improvement in retention.

8.3 That Tableau training for schools staff would be useful.

8.4 That committee members were invited to submit requests for data to Business Planning.

8.5 That representatives from the Students’ Union should be invited to assist with the development of the Retention Strategy.

8.6 That it would be difficult to make any concrete assertions about retention rates for students in receipt of the Disability Support Allowance as the cohort is relatively small.

9. **ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS**

**Received:**

9.1 Enrolments from Partner FE Colleges **(SEWPC 2013 07)**

Reported by Professor Matthew Weait, Pro-Vice Master for Academic Partnerships:

9.2 That the number of applications from colleges with existing progression agreements was up 500%; 78 enrolments for 2013/14 compared to 12 from 2010/11.

9.3 That a large number of applications were for Psychology, but there is an opportunity to develop progression to other subject areas such as Arts and Japanese.
9.4 That City and Islington College and Westminster Kingsway were the biggest feeder institutions.

9.5 That provision of full-time courses partially explains the increase, but widening access work was also crucial.

9.6 The Institutional Partnership Agreement will be extended to all forty-nine FE colleges within the M25, and that a letter is being drafted for these colleges to articulate what Birkbeck can provide.

9.7 That work will be done in growth boroughs specifically around the Olympic site, to bring people into the University Square Stratford campus.

9.8 That schools are invited to work with Professor Weait to create more specific progression agreements.

10. MEETING DATES
Noted:
10.1 Meeting dates in 2013/14
   • Wednesday 22nd January 2014 at 2.30pm
   • Thursday 22nd May 2014 at 2.30pm

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 No other business was reported.

12. MEETING CONCLUDED

Signed: 

________________________________________________________________________
(Tricia King, Chair, Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee)