MINUTES AND REPORT
Noted
11.1 The Report to Academic Board (SEWPC 2016 10)

Confirmed
11.2 The minutes of the meeting of 6 October 2016.

ACTION SHEET
Noted
12.1 Progress on actions agreed at the last meeting (SEWPC 2016 10)

Predictors of student success
12.2 The bid for Catalyst funding to support the next phase of this project had been successful. The project is currently in the planning stage: the initiatives will run over the next year and report back in March 2018. Regular update reports will be made to this Committee.

Counselling service
12.3 The annual report of the counselling service will be discussed at the next meeting.

Action
12.4 (FK) Circulate the counselling service annual report in advance of the next meeting.

MATTERS ARISING
Noted
Alumni Fund

All projects approved for this funding have taken it up.

Terms of Reference and membership

Members noted Terms of Reference and Membership of the Committee, as updated at the last meeting (SEWPC 2016 11). Members were reminded of the importance of the Committee working closely with the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (TQEC).

HE institutions and secondary schools

The College Policy Adviser has been working with the Head of Widening Access and Retention on the College’s response to the Government’s consultation on the potential for HE institutions to set up or sponsor secondary schools. Birkbeck’s response makes it clear that the College does not have expertise around secondary schools and the particular measures of success that are being suggested in the consultation, as Birkbeck students are frequently not traditional school leavers. The Access Agreement guidance for 2018-19 will be released shortly, and is expected to address this policy proposal.

Office for Students

The Policy Adviser is coordinating the College’s response to the consultation on the Office for Students.

Brexit

The ADs Learning and Teaching have proposed to coordinate a series of open lectures to encourage open academic discussion around Brexit. The College will continue to communicate with staff and students about the potential ramifications of the UK leaving the EU as more information becomes available.

Foundation Years

200 applications have been received for the Foundation Years programmes. The College now needs to analyse these applications to consider how to meet the needs of the students that have applied, and how to support them to study successfully in the evening. Members noted that an exit award at the end of the Foundation Year has been built into the model.

It has been established that there is clearly a market for this kind of offering, and the College will consider how to further take advantage of this opportunity. The Schools of Law and BEI are considering what foundation year offer would be most appropriate in their areas.

Action
13.8 (RD) Circulate data on competitor programmes in London.

14 CHAIR’S REPORT
Noted
14.1 Members heard that a UUK taskforce set up to examine violence against women, harassment and hate crimes on university campuses has reported that one in seven university students have experienced sexual harassment. This should be taken into account in the College’s consideration of the student experience as it may indicate that there are support needs that Birkbeck will need to meet. The Committee will receive this UUK report at next term’s meeting.

14.2 The new PVM Education, Diane Houston, will be leading a review of the student experience in the College. Improving the student experience is a top priority for the College, and it is hoped that initial actions from the review will be in place by the end of the academic year.

14.3 The College’s Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission is currently expected to receive a bronze rating due to the metrics being used, although we have submitted a narrative explaining why this does not give an accurate or fair picture. Members noted that there is significant work to do in the College on assessment, feedback and academic support.

14.4 Members heard that recruitment to UCAS courses had improved on the previous year, with growth in the 26-40 year old age group as well as in EU students. Nationally the number of EU students has fallen.

15 RETENTION INITIATIVES
Received
15.1 Reports on retention initiatives in the Schools, Student Services and the Students’ Union. (SEWPC 2016 12)

Noted
15.2 The School of Law reported on a list of initiatives being currently undertaken at the School of Law either expressly for the purpose of student retention or that have a clear and intended impact on student retention. These include administrative service improvements, a retention initiative for exams only students, improving the use of personal tutors, introduction of an academic administrative role providing support for international students, changes in the time of the exam boards to allow earlier decisions to be made on progression, and Learning Development Tutor initiatives.

15.3 The Development and Alumni team run various recruitment, retention and employability focused programmes involving alumni across the College. One of their key retention initiatives involves collaboration with the International team to facilitate informal one-to-one meetings between Birkbeck international students and
alumni, to ease the transition from international students’ home countries into the UK.

15.4 The School of Science have mid-term tests in the Autumn term to try to identify students who may be falling behind early so that support can be put into place. They also have termly exams rather than at the end of the year in order to enable them to give earlier feedback.

15.5 SEWPC encouraged members to make colleagues aware that this point in the term is a particularly significant time for student withdrawal, as students are able to withdraw at this point without incurring costs for the entire year. It is important that colleagues are aware of this and ensure they provide robust student support at this time to those who may be struggling and considering withdrawal.

15.6 The Committee also noted that asking colleagues to communicate this raised another issue, that different Schools and departments support students in different ways, and there is therefore not one clear line of communication through which important information such as this can be spread. These structural issues that might be challenging for staff and students should be considered as part of the review of the student experience that the PVM Education would be carrying out.

16 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS

Received

16.1 An update from the Strategic Projects Manager on progress in the ongoing student engagement projects (SEWPC 2016 13)

Noted

16.2 All of the current live student engagement projects are expected to deliver by September 2017.

Query resolution

16.3 A working pilot of the system is currently being taken around to Schools, departments and relevant professional services colleagues for working feedback. Departments who have not been involved with the query resolution process so far are encouraged to contact the Head of Student Services.

Personal Tutors

16.4 A generic personal tutor policy has been taken through College committees and formally endorsed. The My Birkbeck profile has also been amended to include a direct link to a student’s personal tutor at the moment of login. The project team will now work with the Schools to ensure that the policy is implemented as intended.
Data analysis and surveys

16.5 The survey led by Chris Dewberry to predict patterns of behaviour that could lead to withdrawals or interruptions now forms part of the regular college survey calendar.

Competition and Markets Authority

16.6 Birkbeck is already compliant with CMA expectations in most areas, but there are areas where action is required to ensure full compliance. Necessary actions have been identified in key areas and the work is on schedule to be completed by April 2017.

‘Step Up’ to Law and BEI

16.7 The ‘Step Up’ programme in the School of Arts consists of a blended learning module that is designed to help students in the School make the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate study by developing their study skills and building their confidence. Meetings are scheduled with representatives in Law, BEI and SSHP to identify colleagues in their Schools to work on adapting the current ‘Step up’ module used in Arts. This work is expected to be completed in time to deliver the programme in the summer of 2017.

17 SU TURNAROUND

Received

17.1 An update on progress in the Student Union Turnaround Project (SEWPC 2016 14)

Noted

17.2 The updated included the outcomes from the market research commissioned by the Turnaround Board from Red Brick Research, which identified five broad categories of Birkbeck students with distinctive reasons for studying at the College, who were likely to want to engage with the Student Union in different ways.

17.3 Members noted the need for caution over relying too heavily on these groupings; in reality students would not necessarily fit neatly into one category, or stay in one over the course of their whole student journey. However, the research was helpful in provoking thought on how the SU communicates with students, and how to ensure that the needs of different kinds of students are considered and addressed. The data behind the groupings could also be shared with the College to aid consideration of how the pre-entry phase could be further tailored to reflect the differing motivations and drivers that new students have.

17.4 The new SU structure will be in place by the start of the 2017-18 academic year. It is likely to focus on three key areas: clubs and societies, the student voice, and providing advice.
18 **STUDENT SURVEYS**
Received

18.1 A paper on the Teaching Excellence Framework and the National Student Survey *(SEWPC 2016 15)*

18.2 The NSS Communications Plan *(SEWPC 2016 16)*

Noted

18.3 The target response rate for these surveys is 70%. Members were asked to contact the Head of Student Engagement with any feedback or suggestions for any further places where Team Birkbeck should have a presence to encourage students to participate in the survey.

18.4 Members discussed incentivising students with rewards to complete the survey. Students are entered in a draw to win vouchers. Previous experience had suggested that individual incentives did not increase participation, but this could be revisited. Departmental incentives and bespoke communications to students in particular departments could be especially useful in those departments where they had not in the past reached the response target. More systematic approaches to the NSS, including the use of incentives, would be considered as part of the PVM Education’s review of the student experience.

19 **BIRKBECK STUDENT COMMUNITY**
Received

19.1 A report on key facts and figures relating to the Birkbeck student experience *(SEWPC 2016 17)*

Noted

19.2 The complexity of student needs around disability and other wellbeing services is increasing. The Academic Registrar, College Secretary and the Head of Student Services are working on proposals on student wellbeing which will be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

20 **MEETING DATES**
Noted

20.1 The date of the summer term meeting:
   - 10 May 2017