BIRKBECK
University of London

Minutes of the STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
21 March 2013

Present
David Latchman (Chair), Philip Dewe, Stephen Frosh, Keith Harrison, Nick Head, Matthew Innes, Sue Jackson, Tricia King, David McGhie, Naina Patel, Matthew Weait, Peter Westley

By invitation
Hilary Fraser, Nicholas Keep, Philip Powell, Patricia Tuitt, Miriam Zukas

In attendance
Katharine Bock, Roisin Lynch

Apologies
Costas Douzinas, Dean Pateman, Li Wei

41 MINUTES
Approved
41.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 20 February 2013.

Noted
41.2 The Committee’s spring term report to Finance and General Purposes Committee (SP 2012 30)

42 ACTION SHEET
Received
42.1 An update on action taken and progress on initiatives following the last meeting (SP 2012 31)

Noted
Three year degrees
42.2 The strategy for recruitment to three year degrees was to make as many offers as possible. It was preferable to over- rather than under-shoot the Student Number Control target, as the College’s intention was to expend three-year numbers. Students who had put their applications in via the main UCAS cycle were expecting offers by 31 March 2013, so Schools should make as many offers as possible by then.

42.3 The application to offer figures were being monitored on a fortnightly basis by the Recruitment Monitoring Group and areas where offers needed to be made more quickly were being highlighted as necessary. In some areas Schools were doing other work with prospective students, for example Open Days, before making offers.

Action
42.4 (Executive Deans) Remind staff that as many offers as possible should be made by 31 March 2013.

42.5 Schools who were planning to implement new UCAS programmes for 2014/15 should let the central departments know as soon as possible so that the necessary preparatory work
could be carried out. The existing UCAS data were being analysed to indicate areas where there were high levels of applications so that provision could be developed to address this as appropriate.

42.6 Data were being collected to support advice to Schools on entry tariffs and approaches to Clearing. It was important for Schools to be able to set tariffs for pedagogic reasons, but this had to be balanced with the impact on student numbers.

42.7 One possibility being discussed was setting a global tariff of two E grades at A level and interviewing each potential student in order to make decisions on offers, to send a strong signal to potential students that they were being considered on their individual merits. Members noted that such a strategy would be more successful if it was adopted at College rather than School level, and that it would need to be accompanied by strong messages about the reason for the low tariff to ensure that it was not interpreted as a measure of quality.

**Action**

42.8 (PD) Take the issue of tariff setting forward, also taking into consideration the tariffs set by other London institutions.

**Stratford**

42.9 The Vice Master was working across the Schools to consider what new programmes could be taught in Stratford. Arrangements would be made with the University of East London (UEL) for provision in the UEL library to support Birkbeck programmes based in Stratford. There were also opportunities for all the Schools to teach at Stratford rather than use externally hired space. The Vice Master would organise visits to the new site for School staff.

**Technology Enhanced Learning**

42.10 Advances were being made in both TEL projects. The project group enhancing existing use of TEL within the College was convened and expert project management resource had been identified for the online learning project. The College was in discussions with HE Online about a potential collaboration and a paper would come from TQEC next term.

**Fees**

42.11 There had been some useful initial scoping discussions on the introduction of a modular/credit based approach to fees and a proposal would be brought to the next meeting. The aim was to address the worrying decline in part time undergraduate recruitment that had become apparent since the SPC Awayday in January 2013.

**MASTER'S REPORT**

**Noted**

43.1 The sector-wide downturn in postgraduate recruitment was attracting attention in the press. The College would continue to lobby on part time issues, including for the return of the part time premium and provision for maintenance support loans for part time students.

43.2 HEFCE had given the College positive feedback about the latest draft of the bid for Catalyst funding and had encouraged Birkbeck to submit a full proposal. Development of this was underway.
At the Governors’ meeting on 19 March, Matthew Innes had been appointed as Vice Master Designate, and Philip Powell had been appointed as Pro Vice Master Designate for Enterprise and Innovation.

The Vice-Master would continue with his role, including the business and Stratford portfolios, until the end of his term of office in July 2014.

The Pro Vice Master for Academic Partnerships was planning to base himself at Stratford for two days a week. This was an important signal on the long term agenda for the Stratford portfolio as well as Birkbeck's commitment to East London.

PORTFOLIO REVIEW
Received
44.1 A note on the main issues and outcomes of the portfolio review process for 2012-13 (SP 2012 32)

Noted
44.2 Portfolio review provided an important opportunity for Schools to discuss plans with the central team, including staffing, financial and strategic implications. It was important that the process and timeframe allowed for this. The process would be refined for next year if necessary, based on feedback from the Schools.

Action
44.3 (Executive Deans) Contact MI with feedback on the portfolio review process.

HEFCE FUNDING
Noted
45.1 Provisional HEFCE funding for 2013-14 (SP 2012 33)

45.2 The grant for teaching and research was £2M higher than had been forecast in the current five year financial forecasts. However, the allocation was highly provisional and could be scaled back by HEFCE at several points during the year in the light of student number returns.

PLANNING FOR 2013-14
Noted
46.1 The updated planning and review timeline for 2013-14 (SP 2012 34)

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2014-15: STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT
Approved
47.1 The proposed fee waiver and bursary offer for undergraduates in 2014-15, for inclusion in the 2014-15 Access Agreement (SP 2012 35)

Noted
47.2 The available data suggested that there was no difference in student demand between programmes priced at £8K FTE and £9K FTE. It was therefore proposed that a default fee of £9K FTE should be set for undergraduate provision with a lower fee for special case
provision. The additional fee income could then be used to extend financial support for low to middle income students. Student numbers in this group had fallen in the new system.

47.3 The proposed student support offer for 2014-15 was as follows:
- National Scholarship Programme offer unchanged from 2013-14, i.e. a fee waiver of £3,000 against the first 120 credits of study for students who had a household income of £20,000 or were in receipt of means tested state benefits, and who were enrolled on a programme with an annual fee of £6,000 FTE or more.
- A cash bursary for degree students of:
  - Household income less than £25,000: £1,000 for three year students, £750 for four year students, £500 for six year students
  - Household income between £25,000: £800 for three year students, £600 for four year students, £400 for six year students.

47.4 Fee and bursary arrangements for Certificate of HE students were not yet finalised and required further consideration.

47.5 It was important that the offer that was made was appropriate for the College, so if necessary there would be further communication between the College and OFFA after the deadline for the submission of the Access Agreement.

47.6 The marketing and communication of this offer would be complex and External Relations were working on a strategy for this.

48 BIRKBECK ENGAGEMENT, EMPLOYABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT ECOSYSTEM

48.1 A note from the Pro Vice Master designate for Enterprise and Innovation on the development of a Birkbeck engagement, employability and employment ecosystem (B4E) (SP 2012 36)

48.4 Historical data suggested that using connections with alumni would be advantageous for recruitment; 80% of prospective students who had mentoring contact with alumni went on
to enrol. There was scope to build on work already being done to keep in contact with alumni and to identify those who were willing to provide their skills to help the College, and ensure that these connections were utilised.

48.5 The B4E would build on and added value to existing collegiality rather than being imposed from outside. It maintained the essential nature of the College while considering issues of employability.

48.6 The initial scoping and development of the B4E scheme was expected to take six months.

Approved

48.7 The proposal for the development of a Birkbeck Engagement, Employability and Employment Ecosystem.

49 HIGHER EXPECTATIONS

Received

49.1 A note on the development of FE/HE progression (SP 2012 37)

Noted

49.2 Since 2011, the PVM for Academic Partnerships had been working on consolidating Birkbeck’s relationships with Partner Institutions (PIs), which were an important source of high quality HE ready students for the College and a potential growth market.

49.3 There was likely to be increasing opportunity for the College to recruit these students in the future as loans were going to become available for Level 3 students aged 24+ which would be written off if the student went on to complete a Higher Education course with a HE student loan. This would provide partner institutions with incentives to work more closely with HE partners such as Birkbeck. However in the face of increasing competition for these students from FE Colleges (FECs) and private providers it would be important to focus on enhancing and promoting the ways in which studying at Birkbeck added value.

49.4 The work set out in the paper would focus on capitalising and building on the opportunities that partnership working had already begun to provide, by embedding a partnership strategy at School, Department and Programme level. This would include clearly articulated progression routes into Birkbeck programmes from PI and FEC courses that had been identified as providing the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed at level 4; and the development of collaboration and knowledge sharing opportunities between PI and FEC colleagues and staff at Birkbeck.

49.5 One option for progression might be to offer all applicants from partner institutions a place on an undergraduate course, with the caveat that this would if necessary be conditional on the applicant passing a relevant Certificate of Higher Education.

49.6 The success of this project would depend on it being embedded at every level in the College and having cross-College academic support. A College working group would be established for this purpose.

Action

49.7 (Executive Deans) Contact MW to nominate an appropriate member of academic staff (lecturer B level) to act as a partnership advocate within the Schools and work with MW on the development of partnerships with PIs and FECs.
50 TRANSITIONS FROM UNDERGRADUATE TO POSTGRADUATE STUDY
Noted
50.1 The Pro Vice Masters for Learning and Teaching and Postgraduate Study were setting up a group to consider the transition process from both internal and external undergraduate programmes to postgraduate programmes. The group would look at the potential for developing a 3+1 degree offer and how to appeal to graduates from other institutions with large amounts of debt, who might wish to study in the evening while working. The group would include members of the Outreach Team and Learning Support Officers as well as academic representation from each School.

Action
50.2 (Executive Deans) Contact LW and SJ to nominate an appropriate member of academic staff to take part in the work on transitions from undergraduate to postgraduate study.

51 BE BIRKBECK GUARDIAN PARTNERSHIP
Noted
51.1 The Guardian newspaper was planning to develop a space in Kings Cross to allow them to offer a programme of face to face learning activities. It was looking for partner institutions to enable them to deliver this provision. The College had been in discussions with the Guardian about expanding Be Birkbeck’s offer as part of this development. This provision would be different from the standard Be Birkbeck offer and a feasibility study would be required to scope whether such a partnership would be possible and beneficial to the College. Colleagues with ideas around scoping the project should contact the Executive Dean of the School of Social Science, History and Philosophy.

52 GOVERNORS EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW
Noted
52.1 The Governing Body was carrying out a review of its effectiveness. As part of this process, colleagues would be in touch to arrange interviews with members of SPC to gather views on governing body effectiveness.

53 NEXT MEETING
Noted
53.1 The next meeting would be at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 8 May 2013.