BIRKBECK
University of London

Minutes of the STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
15 February 2011

Present
David Latchman (Chair), John Annette, Costas Douzinas, Philip Dewe, Stephen Frosh, Keith Harrison, Matthew Innes, Tricia King, Sue Jackson, Naina Patel, Peter Westley, David McGhie, Dean Pateman

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

In attendance
Katharine Bock, Esther McKaig, Nick Head, Julia Lerch

38 MINUTES
Received
38.1 The Minutes of the last meeting.

39 ACTION SHEET
Noted
39.1 Action taken following the last meeting. (SP 2010 33)

39.2 Thirteen programmes had been identified for potential 2012-13 UCAS entry.

39.3 A report on the nature of student complaints and feedback would be circulated.

40 MASTER’S REPORT
Noted
40.1 Birkbeck was continuing its strategy of influencing and lobbying Government to ensure that the new fees and loans regime would not disadvantage part-time students. Emerging policy was for the repayment period to begin 3.5 years after the start of study, even if the period of study was longer. If implemented, this would mean that Birkbeck's undergraduate degree students would start paying back from the April of their fourth year, while still studying. The College was campaigning for a fairer payback point for part-time students of 4.5 years after the start of study.

40.2 The interest rate on student loans was substantial and would accrue at a rate of Retail Price Index + 3% during study and afterwards at an interest rate adjusted to income. There was concern about the negative impact of this on the ability of the new regime to enable social mobility.

41 NEXT STEPS FOR BIRKBECK
Noted
41.1 The strategic statement _Next steps for Birkbeck: an invitation to discussion_, setting out proposed responses to the student fee and funding changes, had been published on the intranet [http://staff.bbk.ac.uk/news/newsstory89](http://staff.bbk.ac.uk/news/newsstory89). The Master was meeting with staff from the Schools and the Professional Services and with students to discuss the proposals.

### 42 TEACHING DELIVERY

**Considered**

42.1 A report on current and potential teaching patterns and use of teaching space.  *(SP 2010 34)*

**Noted**

42.2 The Teaching Space Project Group, led by the Pro Vice Master Learning and Teaching with academic and administrative representation from the Schools, was reviewing teaching space and patterns. At its last meeting SPC had commented on outline proposals for spreading teaching and assessment across all three terms.

42.3 There were potential benefits in teaching across three terms. Assessment and feedback closer to teaching could enhance the student experience and retention rates. More students would be taught on College premises and the use of external space would be reduced.

42.4 It would be necessary to ensure that any change to teaching patterns gave proper consideration to academic and administrative workloads and the need to devote time to research. Further consideration would also need to be given to the logistical aspects of having examinations at the end of each term. It had been established that examinations should take place in the evenings so that students would not need to take time off work.

42.5 The Teaching Space Project Group was also planning to reduce charges on Schools for the use of teaching space on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Weekend teaching would focus on optional and repeated modules to take account of student’s commitments linked to religious observances.

42.6 Further consideration of the teaching, learning, student experience and academic staff related aspects of these proposals would be undertaken via Academic Board and its committees.

**Endorsed**

42.7 The continuing development of proposals for teaching across three terms.

### 43 MID YEAR BUDGET REVIEW 2010-11

**Received**

43.1 A report on the Income Distribution Model budget 2010-11, including the outcome of the mid-year budget review.  *(SP 2010 35)*

**Noted**

43.2 The savings and additional income identified by the Schools and the Professional Services during the mid-year budget review.  *(SP 2010 36)*
43.3 The review had led to an improvement in the forecast outturn for 2010-11, from the £457 and £767K deficits forecast in June and November 2010 to a surplus of £275K. This was the sum of the operating positions of Schools in surplus and Schools in deficit and included the costs of the Professional Services whose activities were resourced as indirect costs charged to Schools.

43.4 Taking into account in-year cuts in HEFCE funding, the review sought to identify the largest savings from the Schools most in deficit, as well as to minimise indirect costs for all Schools by reviewing Professional Services spending.

43.5 Some savings in pay costs had been achieved by offsetting donation income against salary costs in Professional Services. Although these donations were not recurring and budgets therefore had to be reviewed every year, they were evidence of the College’s ability to bring in extra income and funding for specific activities.

43.6 The revised income and spending forecasts would form the basis of budget allocations for the remainder of 2010-11. The Committee thanked all staff involved in the review.

Endorsed
43.7 SPC endorsed changes in procedure to facilitate savings (SP 2010 37):

Payments to academic staff for serving on Boards of Examiners
43.8 Academic (not sessional) staff should serve on undergraduate and postgraduate Boards and sub Boards of Examiners, as part of their standard academic duties with no additional allowances.

Rationalisation of recruitment processes
43.9 To maximise impact and minimise cost, external recruitment advertisements would be grouped, offering several posts per advertisement. Departments and Schools wishing to advertise more widely would continue to have the option of meeting the cost of placement from their own budget.

ACTION
43.10 (Registry) Confirm to staff that no additional allowances would be paid for serving on Boards and sub Boards of Examiners.

44 SCHOOL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES PLANS
Considered
44.1 Guidelines and processes for the creation of School and Professional Services plans for 2011-12 to 2014-15. (SP 2010 38)

Noted
44.2 The Committee considered feedback from the recent portfolio review and mid-year budget review exercises as well as the context for planning for 2011-12 to 2014-15. It noted the guidelines and processes for the creation of School and Professional Services plans and advised that research planning and preparation for the REF should be listed as planning imperatives in addition to the imperatives already identified.

Agreed
44.3 The narrative template for School plans.

45 Fee, Bursary and Scholarship Committee

Considered

45.1 The report of the FBS Committee. (SP 2010 39)

Programme and module fees 2011-12

Noted

45.2 Schools had assigned programmes to fee tiers and, as recommended at the previous meeting, had moved a number of programmes to higher tiers.

45.3 FBSC had also agreed the following:

45.4 The fee tier for interdisciplinary programmes should be the highest fee tier among the subject areas contributing to the programme.

45.5 Fee structure for the new route PhD: the programme involved two years part-time/one year full-time of taught provision followed by a research component. The fee for the taught years would be the same as for MA and MSc programmes and the fee for the research years would be the same as for standard PhD programmes.

45.6 The part-time undergraduate international fee, which was currently significantly lower pro rata than the full-time fee, would be raised to £6,600 for a 90 credit year. The full-time fee was £11,334 for a 120 credit year.

45.7 A new fee tier for Certificates of HE that were linked to degree programmes, which was pro rata to tier 1 of the undergraduate degree fee. The spread of fee tiers for Certificates of HE now allowed Schools to set fees either linked to modular provision (tiers 1-4) or linked to degree provision (tier 5).

45.8 ELQ fees for modular provision would be retained and the approach of freezing modular fees at 2010-11 levels be continued.

45.9 FBSC had approved requests from Schools for non-standard fees for 2011-12 on the basis of the following criteria:

- Collaborative provision, where the fee was agreed with a partner institution
- Use of specialist equipment, conferences or field trips
- Distance learning provision
- A limited number of cases where it had been demonstrated that the standard fee tier was not appropriate for the market, linked to plans to migrate the fee to a standard tier in future
- Language (including English) courses, noting that these should also be incorporated into the standard tier structure in the future

Agreed

45.10 The finalised programme and module fees for 2011-12 would be circulated outside the meeting for confirmation and recommendation to F&GPC.
Undergraduate bursary scheme 2011-12

Noted

45.11 The Committee had already made a recommendation that the College should aim to award top-up fee bursaries to all PTG1 (Part Time Grant) holders who applied in 2011-12 because this provided a strong recruitment message that finance did not need to be a barrier to study in 2011-12.

45.12 A recommendation based on predictive modelling for the bursary scheme budget for 2011-12 would be established, to facilitate budget planning and to enable a message on the likely bursary offer to be published for prospective students alongside the fees. FBSC had asked for a forecast of the potential cost of the scheme based on current and predicted student numbers and demand for financial support. This would be used as a basis for budget proposals to feed into the planning round.

Approved

45.13 The Undergraduate Bursary Scheme for 2011-12, subject to acceptable modelling.

Terms and conditions

Agreed

45.14 The following fee related terms and conditions, to be published on the website:

- Prohibition of deferral of enrolment: fees applied would have to be those in place at the time of enrolment.
- Policy for transfer between programmes: continuing student fees would apply for transfers between cognate programmes with common pathways; new student fees would apply for transfers between subject areas.
- Conditions for payment in advance: the fee plus a percentage administration charge would be payable; no deferral or transfers between subject areas would be permitted.

Returning students on modular enrolment

45.15 Fee levels would be held down to pre-2012-13 levels for students who had enrolled for modules but not yet accrued sufficient credit for a Certificate of HE. To qualify for these fee levels students should enrol for credit bearing modules in 2011-12 and 2012-13. There were no guarantees about fee levels after 2012-13.

Foundation Degrees and Certificates of HE with defined progression routes to Bachelors degree programmes

45.16 Students entering these programmes before the new fee regime would be subject to pre-2012-13 level fees, provided that they progressed directly to the higher level and there was a clear progression route into the second year of the degree.

Noted

45.17 Efficiency in application and enrolment processes would be crucial in maximising enrolment in the critical year of 2011-12.

ACTION

45.18 (Executive Deans) Encourage School staff to process applications and enrolments quickly.
46 **INTERNATIONAL GROUP**
Considered

46.1 The report of the International Group *(SP 2010 40)*

46.2 Income from international students had increased. £5.45M overseas fees had been invoiced in 2010-11 compared with £4.28M in 2009-10 and £3.38M in 2008-09. Growth was greatest in postgraduate taught and graduate diploma provision due to a combination of focused student recruitment and development of programmes that were attractive to international students.

46.3 The impact of the College’s international strategy was becoming apparent, with increased recruitment in India, Thailand, Nigeria and South Korea, where agents had been appointed and recruitment activities stepped up.

46.4 The College had responded to UK Border Agency consultation on possible changes in immigration reform and, in common with sector-wide groups, had emphasised the importance of recruiting planned numbers of international students. The College had also applied for increases in student visa allocation with the Border Agency.

46.5 Progression agreements were being developed between the departments of Management and Law and Cambridge Education Group (CEG). The aim of the agreements was not only to provide a new recruitment channel but also to ensure intakes of students who were well prepared with English Language and academic skills. Students on CEG programmes were based at Birkbeck and taught in space hired from Birkbeck by CEG.

46.6 The Committee commended the outgoing Head of International Recruitment on his significant achievements in office.

47 **CHANGES TO HEFCE COMPLETION RULE**
Noted

47.1 HEFCE was replacing its current completion rule with the requirement that where completion depended upon a student undergoing a final assessment for a module, that final assessment would need to take place within 13 calendar months of the start of the year of instance/programme of study. This change could have implications for the College in relation to reassessment, alternative assessment and break in studies.

**ACTION**

47.2 *(NH)* Circulate a note explaining implications of HEFCE changes to completion rule.

48 **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**
Noted

48.1 Dates of future meetings:
- Thursday 19 May 2011 at 11.00 a.m.
- Wednesday 1 June 2011 at 2.00 p.m.