Present:
David Latchman (Chair), Matt Innes, Matthew Davies, Stephen Frosh, Keith Willett, Philip Powell, Roz Dixon, Hilary Fraser, Jonathan Woodhead, Jeremy Tanner, Nick Keep, Richard Wilson (for Naomi Holloway), Nick Head, Megan Reeves, Jonah Duffin, Stewart Motha, Julian Swann, Katharine Bock, Keith Harrison

Apologies
Fraser Keir, Naomi Holloway

In attendance:
Roisin Lynch, Chris Dewberry (for item 55), Miriam Zukas (for item 56), Mary-Clare Hallsworth (for item 56)

52 MINUTES
Confirmed
52.1 The minutes of the meeting of 16th February 2017

53 ACTIONS
Noted
53.1 Progress on actions agreed at the last meeting (SP 2016 37)

Research Career Surveys
53.2 The PVM Research has asked the Head of Research Strategy Support to explain the importance of these surveys to the Schools in order to encourage staff to make these returns.

54 CHAIR’S REPORT
Noted
54.1 The HE bill is due for its Third Reading in the House of Lords. Amendments have been introduced which require the Office for Students to have regard for the need for choice in the provision of higher education, including specifically the choice of part time study. Government has accepted amendment in which the office for students has to pay specific attention to different forms of study. This includes part time, business loaning etc.

54.2 Maintenance loans for part time students will be introduced in 2018/19. This has been confirmed in the Spring Budget. The Policy Adviser, Director of Planning and other colleagues have been undertaking necessary measures to make sure the Government departments are aware of the various issues that may arise with this policy.
55 CATALYST RETENTION INTERVENTION

Received

55.1 An update from Professor Chris Dewberry on progress in the HEFCE-funded retention intervention project (SP 2016 38)

Noted

55.2 Three predictors of intention to quit have been identified: students feeling like they are on wrong course; that they do not have the ability to complete their degree; or that they do not have support from their significant others or families/friends. A grant has been received from HEFCE to carry out an experimental intervention into retention based on these identified factors. The HEFCE funding is designed for research that it is thought could impact the whole sector.

55.3 Six interventions that address the identified predictors of intention to quit have been designed, and ethical approval has been received for the pilot from the College Ethics Committee.

55.4 The intervention will need the support of the School Administration and Professional Services to be successful. Members of the committee are asked to encourage their colleagues to give this support.

55.5 There will be two outcome stages: a report on intention to quit the course in students involved in the pilot which will be delivered in March 2018; and analysis of numbers of students actually dropping out, which will be delivered in summer 2018.

55.6 Members heard that although demographic characteristics and retention are not unconnected, the link is not as strong as it is with the other predictive factors that have been identified.

56 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Received

56.1 An outline of the Public Engagement plan for Birkbeck. (SP 2016 39)

Noted

56.2 Members heard that the focus of public engagement strategy at Birkbeck will be on how it relates to research. This includes everything from research dissemination activities through to collaborative research with non-academic communities. It is expected that as part of REF 2020 universities will be required to have an institutional framework for impact which includes public engagement. Universities which had strong public engagement around the time of last REF did very well in the assessment of impact.

56.3 Members heard that the aim of the strategy is not to encourage academics to do more or different research than they currently do, but to communicate the public engagement impact of what is already being done more effectively.

56.4 The proposed public engagement plan consists of:

- Enhanced strategy, governance and management
- Systematic training of public engagement
- Systematic support for evaluation of public engagement at institutional and researcher level
- Seed funding for public engagement outside the Wellcome remit
- Public recognition for public engagement at Birkbeck College
Alignment of the Be Birkbeck membership scheme with public engagement

Governance and management

56.5 It is proposed that the Public Engagement and Research Impact Committee (PERI) should report to Research Committee instead of SPC. This will link PERI with the College’s research agenda.

Seed funding for public engagement

56.6 As the Wellcome ISSF funding is so specific and mainly relates to healthcare research, it was proposed that there should be a similar scheme for researchers who do not fall within these specifications so that they can be encouraged and supported to hold public engagement activities, particularly those aimed at collaborative research and capacity building.

56.7 The award of ISSF funding is currently considered by the ISSF group, and it was proposed that this further non-Wellcome funding should be awarded by the PERI Committee. Members noted that there would need to be further consideration of how these groups work together to ensure that there is consistency in allocating funding.

56.8 Members noted that these proposals are an excellent step forward that gives us a direction of travel for Public Engagement. While it would require resource both to set up the systems and on an ongoing basis, members felt that this would be recouped in other ways through enabling academics to consider the public engagement dimension of their research from the beginning rather than retrospectively. Professor Zukas would meet with the Director of Process Improvement and Corporate Information Systems to discuss the systems implications of the proposals.

56.9 It was confirmed that the College is required to sign up to the RCUK’s concordat for public engagement in order to receive RCUK funding. In increasingly straitened times, there is likely to be increasing political pressure on RCUK to justify its existence, and it is expected that public engagement will play a significant part in this. It is important that the College recognises public engagement, and can demonstrate in its institutional environment statement for the REF that its strategies are joined together.

56.10 Members noted that there is not currently an explicit consideration of public engagement in research on the promotion forms for academics. The promotion forms need to be reconsidered in the light of the College’s strategic priorities, including also the requirements of the HR Excellence in Research award.

56.11 Members approved the general direction of travel outlined in these proposals.

Action

56.12 (MZ, KW) Put together a costed proposal for approval by Chair’s Action.

57 STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Received

57.1 An update on Student recruitment. (SP 2016 40)

Noted

57.2 Overall applications and offers are at a four year high:
- Postgraduate applications have increased by 27% compared to last year.
- Full time undergraduate applications are up by 19% on last year.
- Part time undergraduate applications are up by 13% on last year, the first year of growth since 2011.
- International postgraduate full time applications are up by 42% compared to last year.
- International undergraduate full time applications are up by 15%.

57.3 Members noted the hard work of colleagues that had resulted in these positive recruitment figures, particularly in more effective marketing to target part time undergraduate applications, and targeted work by the international office to increase international applications.

57.4 However, SPC noted that it is important to remain cautious about undergraduate recruitment in 2017, and to encourage colleagues to continue to maximise offers throughout the recruitment period. Follow up conversations are ongoing with the Schools to ensure that School recruitment targets are realistic and ambitious enough given current recruitment figures.

57.5 Members noted the decline in recruitment at the College’s campus in Stratford, which is largely due to a drop in applications to the Certificate of Higher Education Introductory Studies (HEIS) and HEIS with Nursing, thought to be caused by the withdrawal of financial support for students wishing to go into nursing. The PVM Access and Community Engagement will report on Stratford at the next meeting of SPC.

58 FOUNDATION YEAR GUIDELINES

58.1 Offer making guidelines for Degree with Foundation year. *(SP 2016 41)*

58.2 Noted

To date, 252 applications have been received and 155 offers have been made for the new four year full time degrees with Foundation Year. Applicants fall largely into two categories:

- A: Younger students taking A levels or other level 3 qualifications with lower predicted grades than would be accepted onto the degree in Clearing
- B: Older more ‘traditional’ Birkbeck students who have a more diverse range of qualifications and experience.

58.3 It was proposed that category A students, if their application is satisfactory, should be given a conditional offer for the degree with Foundation Year. In addition, if their predicted grades are of a high enough level they could be offered a place on the degree. Category B students should be interviewed to establish whether they are better suited to the full-time degree with Foundation Year or the part-time degree.

58.4 SPC endorsed these guidelines to be distributed throughout the College, subject to an update to note the importance of being extremely careful and sensitive to individual cases when deciding which offer to make. The Catalyst retention intervention project noted that a predictor of intention to quit was students feeling that they are not capable of doing a degree; it is therefore important to be cautious about putting a student straight onto a three degree if they do not feel capable of this.
59  **FINANCIAL POSITION**

Received

59.1 A paper on the College’s financial position and budget setting. *(SP 2016 42)*

**Noted**

59.2 The current forecast surplus for the year is £4.7 million. This is an increase from the original budget, largely due to enrolment numbers that have exceeded targets.

59.3 Members noted that when considering the budget setting process for next year it is necessary to take into account the need to achieve sufficient surpluses to fund the College’s estates strategy as well as other activities. There are likely to be further pension increases. Over the coming weeks we will need to re-test our tuition income assumptions, agree where we want to invest in new activity and consider where financial savings can be made. Investment decisions must be affordable for the long term.

59.4 Members noted that increased efforts to improve retention will have an impact on student number figures over time, and asked for this to be included in modelling.

59.5 Following analysis of the financial forecasts submitted to HEFCE in July 2016, HEFCE noted that they were concerned that the sector was collectively predicting student numbers greater than the available pool of students. HEFCE recommended that Governors robustly challenge financial forecasts. Members also heard that the joint staff unions have released their pay rise request at the start of this year’s negotiating round, which is considerably higher than the 2.75% indicative increase used in our financial modelling. Birkbeck must remain mindful of risks, including competition and post-Brexit anomalies, and develop risk mitigation strategies which may involve a combination of scaling back some existing activities, phasing investment in new areas, and general reductions in expenditure.

60  **APPRENTICESHIPS**

Received

60.1 An update on the apprenticeships initiative. *(SP 2016 43)*

**Noted**

60.2 Birkbeck has been accepted onto the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoTAP), which will allow the College to accept apprenticeships to Birkbeck from October 2017.

61  **PERSONAL TUTORING**

Received

61.1 An update on the personal tutor project. *(SP 2016 44)*

**Noted**

61.2 The College has received a negative flag for the academic support metric in the TEF assessment. The availability and engagement of personal tutors and how this meets student expectations is a significant part of this, and important to support retention.

61.3 An updated College policy on personal tutoring was agreed by the College committee structure last term. A project group has been set up to consider how to improve staff engagement with personal tutoring and provide better support. Meetings will take place with each School to find out how personal tutoring is
currently operating. It is felt that it will be of benefit to develop a training day for personal tutors, and online resources for personal tutors to refer to.

61.4 Members noted that this work has identified a need for further development of personal tutoring, and Schools may differ in how they wish to meet this need, for example whether it will be carried out by permanent academic staff or staff appointed specifically for this role. SPC noted the need for the project team to consider the space and staff resource that full implementation across the College will require.

61.5 This work will also interact with the student experience review being carried out by the PVM Education.

62 WEB IMPLEMENTATION
Received
62.1 An update on the web implementation project (SP 2016 45)
Noted
62.2 Three specific projects have been identified around website development:
   • Website implementation project
   • Website technology project
   • Website management project

62.3 These projects will require consultation with a wide range of colleagues, in addition to representation on project teams from both academic and professional services staff. Members were reminded of the strategic importance of this College level project, and asked for their support in recommending colleagues to participate in these projects.

63 SU TURNAROUND BOARD
Received
63.1 An update on progress from the SU Turnaround Board. (SP 2016 46)
Noted
63.2 Significant progress has been made. Current SU officers are working hard to develop a SU that is useful for Birkbeck students, and all colleagues are asked to try to engage positively with the SU.

63.3 The Turnaround Board will now need to develop a proposal on how the future activities of the SU will be funded that satisfies College management and the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

64 TIER 4 VISA UPDATE
Received
64.1 An update on the College’s compliance with international student visa requirements (SP 2016 47)
Noted
64.2 The College’s continuing ability to offer Tier 2 and 5 sponsorship for academic and professional services staff is linked to Tier 4 student compliance.

64.3 ISA conducted an audit of attendance data for research students. The results were overall satisfactory, with concern in two departments where information on
supervisory sessions was not consistently recorded. SPC asked for guidance on recording supervisory sessions for research students to be discussed at the next meeting of the Research Students Sub Committee.

64.4 ISA is currently considering how the College can demonstrate the requirement that research students are engaging with their studies during the summer months. SPC asked for this issue, along with the recording of supervisory sessions, to be considered at the Research Committee. A framework should be created that focuses on the good practice of effectively recording sessions and engaging with research students during the summer.

65 BUSINESS WORLD AT BIRKBECK
Received
65.1 A note on progress in the HR/Payroll and Finance Systems replacement project (SP 2016 48)

Noted
65.2 There is still significant work to do but good progress is being made in the project. SPC noted that this is an ambitious, large-scale project, and commended the work being done by colleagues in Finance, HR, and Corporate Information Systems.

66 DATES OF MEETINGS 2016-17
Noted
66.1 Dates of meetings for 2016-17:
   • 9 May 2017 at 2pm
   • 7 June 2017 at 2pm
   • 5 July 2017 at 2pm