MINUTES OF THE TEACHING & QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
19 January 2010

Present:
Professor Sue Jackson (Pro-Vice-Master for Learning and Teaching) (Chair)
Dr Fiona Candlin, Mr James Emmott (Students' Union), Professor Michelle Everson,
Dr Jas Gill, Dr Simon Green, Ms Victoria Hunt (on behalf of Ms Jill Entwistle),
Ms Anne Jamieson, Mr Neil O’Connor, Mrs Naina Patel, Mr Philip Payne,
Ms Tami Peterson (Students’ Union), Dr Jim Pitts, Dr Dick Rayne, Dr Martin Shipway,
Dr Anita Walsh, Dr Matthew Weait

Apologies for absence:
Dr Edwin Bacon, Professor Raymond Caldwell, Mr Jeremy Tanner, Dr Linda Trenberth,

In attendance:
Mr Nigel Buckle (ITS User Support Manager)
Ms Natalie Jayasekara (Registry Services)
Mr Scott Miller (Assistant Academic Registrar, Operations and Projects)
Mr Dean Pateman (Academic Registrar)
Mr Trevor Pearce (Deputy Academic Registrar, Academic Services)
Ms Alison Wood (Head of Quality Enhancement and Validation) (Secretary)

1 MINUTES
Confirmed:
1.1 The minutes of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee held on 6 October 2009. (attached)

2 REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Noted:
2.1 The Academic Board’s receipt of the Report of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee dated 6 October 2009 and its resulting resolutions. The Report and an extract from the Executive Committee’s Minutes are provided. (TQEC 19 – 2009/10)

3 ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING
Noted:
3.1 A summary of action taken following the meeting of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee held on 6 October 2009. (TQEC 20 – 2009/10)

Agreed:
3.2 The Head of Quality Enhancement and Validation will follow up on the planned equality and diversity event next term once Professor Les Moran and Dr Rosie Cox have returned from their sabbaticals.

3.3 The following matters arising from the previous meeting of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee that were not covered elsewhere in the agenda or contained in the above action sheet.
i Master’s Degree Characteristics Reference Point (Minute 8.1 of meeting held on 6 October 2009). A number of comments have been submitted to the QAA regarding consultation on the new Master’s degree characteristics reference point, circulated to relevant colleagues for their consideration. These are detailed below (see: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/masters/MastersDegreeCharConsult2009.pdf).

- Page 5 ‘Assessment’. This could usefully be presented as an indicative list, although the phrase ‘other types of coursework’ does provide for some flexibility.

- Appendix 1 ‘Research Master’s’, ‘Programme Characteristics’, bullet point 4: The Research Master’s definition is that a research master’s is a programme where “the research component (including a requirement to produce original work) is larger than the taught component when measured by student effort”. Birkbeck’s Common Awards Scheme stipulates that MRes programmes should normally contain a dissertation element of 120 credits, which would fall under this definition; however the consultation document states that this would only normally cover the MPhil award, with MRes in the ‘Specialised/advanced study master’s’ group that “are predominantly composed of structured learning opportunities (are ‘taught’)”.

ii College’s Quality Strategy Project 2.5 ‘Professional Development of Staff’ (Minute 14.4 of meeting held on 6 October 2009). This matter has been discussed between the Director of the CLPD (Dr Anita Walsh), Director of Human Resources (Naina Patel), Academic Registrar (Dean Pateman) and the Chair of this committee and it has been agreed that the PVM Learning and Teaching will review professional development for learning and teaching in consultation with the Director of Human Resources and the Director of the CLPD.

iii College’s Quality Strategy Project 2.7 ‘Evaluation of Estates and Fitness for Purpose of Teaching Accommodation and Equipment’ (Minute 14.5 of meeting held on 6 October 2009). It was previously noted that this matter is key to the success of the College’s restructuring and to learning and teaching activities as a whole. As such, the Chair has raised this matter with the Strategic Review Implementation Team with a view to taking this project forward immediately rather than as planned in 2010/11. It has been agreed that a Birkbeck Teaching Space project should commence with immediate effect, with the PVM Learning and Teaching as Project Leader (see the Chair’s report below).

iv 2009 National Student Survey (Minute 15.2 of meeting held on 6 October 2009). The full range of reports on the 2009 National Student Survey have been circulated to Heads of Department for their Departments to consider and to provide a response to those matters highlighted, for consideration of the responses received by this committee at its meeting in the summer term. Matters of significance/concern will be flagged up for possible action by key College committees following each Department’s consideration of the results.

v Capping for Reassessment (Minute 6.3 of meeting of Teaching Committee held on 5 May 2009). The College will be undertaking a feedback exercise during the Spring term 2010 on the implementation of CAS, asking Exam Board Chairs and Assistant Deans (Learning and Teaching) to comment upon various aspects of CAS regulation and policy as well as the implementation process. As part of this exercise
Exam Board Chairs and Assistant Deans will explicitly be asked to comment upon regulations relating to capping, with a view to ascertaining whether there is broad support for any move to re-introduce capping of re-assessment (the current position is that assessment is only capped in response to assessment offences, at the discretion of an assessment offence panel).

4 **CHAIR’S REPORT**

**Noted:**

4.1 The Chair reported that she is currently involved in several projects and activities regarding learning, teaching and quality enhancement including:

- **Portfolio Review.** It is crucial to build on the proposals arising from this process to ensure the College meets its student recruitment targets.

- **Recruitment** is being taken forward with the Assistant Deans (Recruitment and Retention) during a retention away day. Development of a formal College Admissions Policy will be a priority and this will be taken forward in the first instance by the Academic Registrar and the Pro-Vice-Masters for Learning and Teaching and for Student Experience in partnership with Schools. One goal will be a ‘one point of contact’ approach to applications, with applicants not suited for the programme to which they had applied being offered, where appropriate, a place on a viable alternative such as undergraduates being directed towards a CertHE or Higher Education Introductory Studies programme or a graduate to a Masters or Postgraduate Certificate, or to an appropriate Foundation degree which are ELQ exempt.

- As important as recruitment in obtaining necessary student numbers is **retention and completions.** The Chair is working with the Pro-Vice-Master (Student Experience) on the key issue of retention, with an Away Day planned for early next month, upon which she will report back to this committee.

- The Chair is also keen to start more of a dialogue about **completions** – including a discussion about assessment – especially when and how we assess – and about feedback. She will be looking at this with the Assistant Deans (Learning and Teaching) at their spring term meeting.

- The Chair is also leading on the **Teaching Space Project** with three strands to gather institutional data on the use of teaching space; and to review the use of internal and external space and patterns of teaching to support the accommodation needed to teach an expanding cohort of students. Further details of this can be found on the strategic review website at: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/strategic-review/2009-10-projects/sivfm/birkbeck-teaching-space-project/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/strategic-review/2009-10-projects/sivfm/birkbeck-teaching-space-project/).

- **Learning Support project** is being led by the Pro-Vice-Master, Learning and Teaching and has e-learning embedded in its aims. It is in two phases being developed concurrently – a review of learner support in the Schools and centrally. Further details of this can be found on the strategic review website at: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/strategic-review/2009-10-projects/sivfm/review-of-learning-support/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/strategic-review/2009-10-projects/sivfm/review-of-learning-support/).

- The Chair is also working with the Academic Registrar on the development of Cross-College Teaching Provision within the **Central and Collaborative Provision Unit** – Birkbeck has a number of programmes which help develop learning opportunities across the College, including the Birkbeck Languages Unit, English for Academic Purposes, Higher Education Introductory Studies, Study Skills and Work-based Learning. This Unit will bring together the work of these
programmes, and will be administered by a single integrated administration team located in Registry Services.

- The Chair is working on the review of Foundation Degrees with the Pro-Vice-Master (Lifelong Learning and Engagement) and the Academic Registrar.

- The Annual Learning and Teaching Conference will take place on Tuesday 25 May on ‘Developing Learning and Teaching in Changing Times’. The Chair is delighted that the keynote speaker will be Professor Julia Goodfellow who is Vice-Chancellor at the University of Kent, was Chief Executive of the BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council), a Fellow of the College, and a previous Vice-Master of Birkbeck.

- Nominations have been agreed for distinguished Sessional Lecturer awards, which will be presented at the Diploma and Certificate holders ceremony in February. The Committee was invited and gave endorsement to the College’s three nominations for the HEA’s National Fellowship Scheme for Dr Zhu Hua, Ben Cranfield and Steve Hiron.

5 COLLEGE PROGRAMMES COMMITTEE

Reported:

5.1 The following programmes were recommended for approval by the Chair, acting on behalf of the Committee, in consultation with the Chair of the College Programmes Committee, and were subsequently approved by the Academic Board to begin in October 2010:

- FD Archaeological Practice and Techniques
- FD Arts Management
- BSc Planetary Science with Astronomy
- LLB (Full-time)
- MA Egyptology

Noted:

5.2 The Chair of the College Programmes Committee (Dr Jim Pitts) has agreed to a special meeting of the committee being held in early February to take Chair’s action on all programmes that have been scrutinised by Programme Development Panels for commencement in 2010/11. This meeting will also be attended by the Chair of this committee who will be in attendance to consider the proposals for approval by Chair’s action on behalf of the TQEC.

6 NATIONAL STANDARDS

Academic credit in higher education in England - an introduction

Noted:

6.1 The QAA has published a revised, straightforward guide to academic credit, offering an introduction to how credit is used in Higher Education in England. Academic credit in higher education in England - an introduction has been designed to complement the Higher education credit framework for England, and is intended for students and those unfamiliar with credit. The publication includes an overview of what credit is and when it is awarded, as well as an explanation of credit accumulation and transfer. Full details of which can be found on the QAA website at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/standardsandquality/credit/intro.asp.

7 LEARNING & TEACHING STRATEGY 2009-12

Received:

7.1 A finalised version of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2009-12 which has been placed on the College website at the following link: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lts/. This has been
amended in light of comments made by the Academic Board Executive Committee as well as updates to statistical data and projects 2, 3 and 8. The Strategy will be subject to some further amendments early next year to reflect equality and diversity matters which will be presented to this committee for formal approval at its summer meeting. *(TQEC 21 – 2009/10)*

### 8  2010 NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

**Noted:**

8.1 Preparations have begun for the 2010 survey in terms of providing Ipsos Mori, who conduct the survey, with the student sample, ordering publicity materials, finalising institutional contact details, and confirming the optional questions to be added to the standard NSS questionnaire. Birkbeck has selected six banks of optional questions, in consultation with the Students’ Union, (B2 Course Content and Structure; B5 Course Delivery; B6 Feedback; B9 Workload; B10 Assessment; B11 Learning Community) and two institution-specific questions: *(i) As a result of completing my degree, I believe that I have improved by career prospects; (ii) The course has stimulated my interest in the field of study.*

8.2 The Quality Enhancement and Validation (QEV) team have circulated to School Administrators a range of publicity materials to be distributed to students to advertise the 2010 NSS. This was launched at Birkbeck on Monday 11th January 2010 and the QEV team will keep an eye on the response rates achieved by Departments, following up with relevant colleagues where further encouragement may be needed for students to complete the Survey.

### 9  ANNUAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2009/10

**Received:**

9.1 The annual programme monitoring template that has been circulated to Undergraduate Programme Directors for completion by 27 January. *(TQEC 22 - 2009/10)* This has replaced the cognate programme reports piloted last year and should be completed for all taught programmes to provide an opportunity to reflect upon changes made to the programme, in particular highlighting enhancements to learning and teaching practices as well as flagging up any difficulties/challenges faced which could helpfully be brought to the attention of the this committee.

**Noted:**

9.2 Concerns have been raised regarding the fact that this is a combined report covering Certificate of Higher Education and degree programmes. This has raised concerns regarding where responsibility lies for completion of these reports, particularly when Programme Managers in the Faculty of Lifelong Learning have traditionally completed the more pragmatic tasks of collating student data and feedback upon which academics may draw.

**Agreed:**

9.3 The Academic Registrar will raise this matter at the forthcoming meeting of the School Managers after which he will discuss how best to proceed with the Head of Quality Enhancement and Validation and the Assistant Academic Registrar (Operations and Projects).

### 10  PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

**Noted:**

10.1 The Assistant Deans (Learning and Teaching) have been asked to discuss the College’s policy on peer observation of permanent staff and of the classroom visiting procedure for all Sessional Lecturers *(see: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/strategies/peerobv](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/strategies/peerobv)) at the spring*
meeting of STQECs. This is with a view to reporting on their implementation in each School at the summer meeting of this committee. At subsequent STQEC meetings, a record should be received of the number of staff observed, and categories (new academics, established academics, sessional lecturers); and any key matters of generic interest to the School or its Departments should be identified and taken forward as necessary.

10.2 It would be helpful for the School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committees to consider how best to conduct this process in order to develop best practice and for it to be a reflective process. Consideration may be given, for example, to processes such as ‘Peer Supported Review’ conducted at Sheffield Hallam University which has a conceptual focus allowing for development around the specific needs of individual colleagues wishing to seek advice on specific forms of teaching and learning from more experienced colleagues. This doesn’t exclude the possibility of peer observation but allows for greater flexibility.

11 **E-LEARNING**

Received:

11.1 A presentation from Dr Dick Rayne (College e-Learning Coordinator/Assistant Dean for Learning and Teaching - School of Science) on e-Learning.

11.2 The term ‘e-Learning’ may now be somewhat limited and antiquated; ‘Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning’ (TETL) probably defines the territory better. At the core of Birkbeck’s TETL activities is the ‘Bloomsbury Learning Environment’ (BLE), an installation of the Blackboard Academic Suite Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). [After a limited migration to the BLE in 2007-08, the College moved fully from WebCT to the BLE in 2008-09.] The BLE is a shared service between members of the Bloomsbury Colleges (minus the School of Pharmacy), hosted externally in Amsterdam by Blackboard’s hosting arm.

11.3 The BLE is managed by a Steering Group, which meets monthly, consisting of relevant representatives (Heads of eLearning or similar) of each institution. The service is coordinated by Sarah Sherman (BLE Service Manager) who liaises with Blackboard and coordinates various TETL projects some of which have been funded externally. She also organises monthly meetings of a BLE Technology Group, comprised of relevant staff from the member colleges. A BLE Pedagogy Group has organised an annual showcase of good practice. Overall, despite the diverse nature of the BLE’s member institutions, much has been gained from sharing of common interests and expertise.

11.4 Longer-term there are questions around which VLE platform best suits the needs of BLE members and is sustainable on grounds of cost. Given that there is one year remaining of the Blackboard contract, the BLE Steering Group is now examining possible alternatives. There is much movement in the sector, some away from and some towards Blackboard, and therefore much work already conducted on comparisons between different products. The Steering Group will soon be considering whether to remain with Blackboard or seek other alternatives. A related issue is the extent to which the Colleges might wish to mimic VLE-type services using, for example, “cloud computing” tools provided by Google. [Of note: the BLE group recently conducted a JISC-funded investigation of Google applications in teaching, learning and administrative activities.]

11.5 There have been a range of developments at Birkbeck in the area of e-Learning including:

- **Organizational Psychology** which conducts much of its programmes through network learning providing a mix of distance and face-to-face learning.
• Development of various “-casting” activities; that is, podcasting, screencasting, videocasting, etc.

• **e-assessment**: for example, in Biological Sciences where computer-based tests are used extensively. Within this category we can also include digital submission of assignments through the BLE. This affords convenience to the students (no need to visit Birkbeck to deliver assignments) and the opportunity to use ‘Turn-It-In’ for plagiarism checking. Overall, digital submission can vastly reduce the amount of paperwork exchanged, with the biggest gain occurring if digital marking were to take place.

• **Audience Response System (ARS) used in Biological Sciences** as an extremely effective tool for measuring student understanding and for revision. This may be used for formative testing in class in anonymous mode, which improves student participation. An ARS was presented as an example of enhancement to the internal review panel for Biological Sciences and has been recommended that it be extended across the College.

11.6 The question remains regarding where e-Learning sits (ITS? Library? Elsewhere? In-between?) and the key need for an individual at the centre to concentrate, perhaps full-time, on taking e-learning developments forward.

11.7 The Chair stated that the Media Services Review led by Philip Payne (Librarian), the Learning Support and Teaching Space projects will all be considering e-Learning including how it may be taken forward most effectively.

11.8 The Students’ Union has examined how best to communicate with its students and is currently using Google groups as well as considering greater use of Wiki’s. Blackboard is regarded as an antiquated system with many students used to more up-to-date applications. Use of Blackboard is also patchy on some programmes, and this inhibits a habit of regular use that would make Blackboard more effective and relevant. The Union feel it is extremely important to have a full-time member of staff dedicated to development of e-learning since Birkbeck appears to be falling somewhat behind other HEIs when access to resources and support is so key to part-time students.

11.9 A new version of Blackboard (v. 9) has many improvements, certainly cosmetically and there is the possibility of having other services (e.g. Facebook, Google applications, etc.) operating in association with this system. The BLE Steering Group debated whether to move to version 9 for 2009-10, but decided (wisely it turns out) not to do so; as for many new software releases, the 9.0 version was not stable and caused many headaches for early adopters. For 2010-11, the BLE Steering Group also has decided not to move to version 9, preferring to first examine the longer-term position vis a vis Blackboard as the supported VLE.

11.10 There is a need for the College to think much more strategically about e-Learning and the degree to which this should be used in light of the College’s mission to provide part-time, face-to-face learning and its effect upon recruitment and retention.

11.11 The committee reiterated the need for a more strategic approach towards the development of e-Learning at the College perhaps through a dedicated member of staff to coordinate activities, and to be active in the wider HE sector regarding TETL.
12 **QAA INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT (JUNE 2010)**

**Noted:**

12.1 A preliminary meeting has been held between members of the Institutional Audit Steering Group and Will Naylor (QAA Assistant Director). The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the scope of the Audit, preparation of the Institutional Briefing Paper, submission of documentary evidence, matters relating to the Information Digest produced by the QAA, and the basis for choosing audit trails.

**Received:**

12.2 The draft Institutional Briefing Paper produced by the Steering Group for submission to the QAA at the end of March. This has already been circulated to key College post holders for comment and is now being circulated to this committee for consideration and recommendation to the Academic Board Executive Committee, Academic Board and Governors. *(TQEC 23 – 2009/10)*

12.3 The Institutional Audit Steering Group has been extended to include Dr Martin Shipway, Dr Dick Rayne and Dr Linda Trenberth (Assistant Deans, Learning and Teaching) and the Chair thanked them for their inclusion.

12.4 The Students’ Union has been working on putting together a Student Written Submission for the Audit and a working group has been examining student surveys and ways of contacting students to pull together as wide-ranging a submission as possible.

13 **COMMON AWARDS SCHEME**

**Considered and endorsed:**

13.1 The College Policy on the Accreditation of Prior Learning produced by Trevor Pearce (Deputy Academic Registrar - Academic Services) in liaison with relevant colleagues for formal approval by the Academic Board. *(TQEC 24 – 2009/10)*

13.2 Trevor Pearce (Deputy Academic Registrar, Academic Services) thanked Scott Miller (Assistant Academic Registrar – Operations and Projects) and Dr Anita Walsh (Director of the Institute of Professional Studies) for their work in putting together this policy. The intention of this document is to act as a policy rather than a detailed procedure with the latter to be developed shortly by Scott Miller. Judgements are to be undertaken by two academic members of staff and are to be the purview of the Boards of Examiners in ensuring that correct processes are being followed and appropriate judgements made.

14 **INTERNAL REVIEWS 2009/10**

**Received:**

14.1 **Responses.** An oral response from Dr Dick Rayne to the points raised within the internal review report for Biological and Chemical Sciences – the review was held on 1 April 2009. This will be followed up by a formal written response with all matters for consideration at the College level referred to relevant colleagues or committees. Further information on these will be added to the above written response.

**Noted:**

14.2 The panel recommended that the College should ensure that an external audit is undertaken as a priority, involving an expert in Biomedical Sciences, to establish the feasibility of accreditation of the BSc Biomedicine by the Institute for Biomedical Sciences. BSc Biomedicine accreditation allows for students to be registered with the Institute and some students feel this is a key requirement of any such programme but it is in fact questionable whether such accreditation is needed, particularly since this relates only to syllabus and not to the quality
of the programme. However, the Department will be looking further into this matter and have an external in mind to conduct this feasibility review.

14.3 The panel recommended that the College should undertake an audit of all laboratory resources, particularly with a view to supporting the teaching in Biomedicine and Environmental Science. This audit will be conducted as part of the Teaching Space project.

14.4 The panel recommended that the College should investigate the possibility of improved cohort analysis in order to fully examine and support retention. A meeting has been held between the Department and Planning and Business Systems to discuss cohort analysis with the hope primarily to have improved explanations for how data is compiled which is particularly important for completions. The Department felt reassured that this will be taken forward by Planning and Business Systems.

14.5 The panel appreciated the pragmatic reasons for the current system of personal tutoring but recommended that the School should review this strategy. Personal tutoring will be discussed at a forthcoming departmental meeting.

15 STUDENT COMPLAINTS, APPEALS AND CODE OF STUDENT DISCIPLINE/ASSESSMENT OFFENCES

Considered:

15.1 The following combined reports from Trevor Pearce (Deputy Academic Registrar - Academic Services) for cases received/reported to Registry on the 2008/09 academic session:

a. Student Complaints, Appeals and Code of Student Discipline including comparative figures from the previous year; (TQEC 26 - 2009/10)

b. Assessment Offences. (TQEC 27 - 2009/10)

Noted:

15.2 Attention was drawn to paragraphs 9 and 21 of the report. The numbers of complaints appears to remain stable across a number of years. However, there is a need for a much clearer distinction between what constitutes a formal complaint and it is hoped that development of a Dispute Resolution Policy will achieve this. Such a policy will be developed this academic year for introduction in 2010/11.

15.3 There have been different interpretations in Schools regarding what constitutes plagiarism and therefore a need to define this more closely in the policy. This will take place in consultation with relevant colleagues.

15.4 The University of Leicester has developed an online ‘Learning Object’ which could usefully be considered by Birkbeck for dealing with plagiarism. This matter will be discussed as part of the Learning Support project as there is much excellent work taking place nationally which Birkbeck could draw upon.

15.5 The Academic Registrar thanked Trevor Pearce for the excellent work he has conducted in this area which was praised by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator during a recent visit to Birkbeck.

16 STUDENT EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRES

Noted:

16.1 The following reports on the analyses of the on-line questionnaires for the 2008/09 academic session will be circulated to the Committee following this meeting to ensure fully
directed summaries may be provided rather than raw data. (TQEC 28 - 2009/10)
Further details of the surveys can be found at: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/qev/feedback/.

i  End-of-Year Survey for taught undergraduate and postgraduate students
    (including finalists).

ii  Student Withdrawal Survey. It is recognised that the views of such students
could potentially be helpful for retention work in possibly highlighting
trends/themes emerging from this.

Noted:

16.2  The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) will now be formally considered by
      the College Research Committee and will be reported to this committee for information
      only.

17  ANY OTHER BUSINESS
Noted:

17.1  A concern had been raised with the Students’ Union regarding a deadline for assessment
      being moved which did not fit in with previous conventions. The Union would like to ask
      that when previous conventions are changed that these are highlighted as much as possible
      to students. The Committee reiterated that this is always the case but thanked the Union
      for raising this matter.

18  DATE OF NEXT MEETING
To note the date of the next meeting of the Teaching and Quality Enhancement
Committee this session
    11 May 2010
at 2.00 pm in the Council Room.

Signed………………………………..

Date………………………………..