Minutes of the Meeting of Council - Thursday 28 November 2013

Present:  
Mr Stephen Cox (Chair)  
Mr Paul Blagbrough  
Mr John Brannan  
Professor Clare Bradley  
Mr Alex Cadier  
Mr Gurpreet Dehal  
Professor David Gilbert  
Mrs Christine Goodear  
Mr Majid Hawa  
Professor Paul Layzell  
Mr Jeremy McIlroy  
Ms Sarah Moffat  
Mr Iain Ross  
Professor Anne Sheppard  
Mr Amarbeer Singh  
Mrs Chris Shoukry  
Ms Colette Wilson  

Apologies:  
Mrs Margaret Jack  
Mr Mark Newlands  
Mr David Spence  
Mrs Sarah Tyacke  

In attendance:  
Ms Helen Coleman  
Director of Communications and External Relations  
Professor Rosemary Deem  
Vice Principal Education  
Professor Paul Hogg  
Vice Principal and Dean of Science  
Professor Rob Kemp  
Deputy Principal (Planning, Resources and Partnerships)  
Mrs Cheryl Newsome  
Director of Human Resources  
Professor Katie Normington  
Vice Principal (Staffing) and Dean of Arts and Social Sciences  
Professor Bob O’Keefe  
Vice Principal (External Engagement) and Dean of Management & Economics  
Mrs Julia Roberts  
Director of Strategic Development  
Mr Graeme Robinson  
Director of Finance  
Mr Simon Higman  
Registrar and Secretary  
Mrs Pauline Martin  
Governance Support Officer  
Mrs Hilary Baker  
Secondary Minutes  

1 MEMBERSHIP  
NOTED apologies received from Margaret Jack, Mark Newlands, David Spence and Sarah Tyacke. 13/319  

NOTED that there are currently three lay member vacancies and one non-academic staff vacancy. 13/320  

2 REGISTER OF INTEREST  
NOTED that the updated register of interests was an agenda item. There were no declarations of interest in agenda items. 13/321  

3 MINUTES  
AGREED the following amendment to the minutes of the meeting 2 October 2013: 13/322  
• 13/264 to remove “further surveys” and replace with “a subsequent survey”  
With this amendment the minutes were signed.
4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES
There were none.

5. UNSTARRING OF ITEMS
The following Part B items was unstarrred:
   - Item 19 Remuneration Committee Minutes 23 October 2013 discussed under reserved Area Business.

6. SUMMARY OF STRATEGY DAY DISCUSSION
NOTED the key outcomes of the Strategy day and the future actions.

AGREED The target to reduce response times for offers to students to five days. Council to be updated with progress.

NOTED the issues raised by the presentation from Mary Curnock Cook, Chief Executive Officer of the Universities and Colleges Admission Service, regarding the anticipated growth in number of applicants to higher education with BTEC qualifications. The extension of the academic footprint was considered necessary in order to achieve the significant increase in student numbers required by the financial plan. The academic footprint would be extended by further development of the existing academic portfolio and continuing to explore opportunities to add new academic subjects.

NOTED the need to prioritise carefully the large number of potential projects in order to ensure their delivery to a high standard.

REQUIRED A report to the March Council meeting regarding the potential development of the academic footprint taking account of the risks and ability to deliver.

NOTED The strategy day also considered international development and the potential alternative strategies for achieving growth outside of the UK. Council’s response of caution towards international growth was noted but the discussion that took place provided a broad framework within which to consider the College’s approach towards international growth. A broad internationalisation strategy would be proposed through the Academic Board and then to Council in due course.

7. PRINCIPAL’S REPORT
7.1 RECEIVED a verbal report from the Principal.

NOTED the continuing change in the sector particularly with regard to student finance and fees in the run up to a general election.

NOTED the opening of the Caryl Churchill theatre and the Boiler House lecture theatre.

NOTED the launch of the UK Janet 6 computer network, on time and within budget, connecting the whole of the UK higher education system bringing significant benefits to research and teaching through increased bandwidth. Royal Holloway had excellent connectivity onto the core network allowing the College to reap the benefits of the investment.

NOTED the closure of the 1994 group. The priority will be to build the Royal Holloway brand whilst continuing to explore opportunities to collaborate with other universities on activities of mutual benefit.

7.2 RECEIVED a verbal update on the purchase of a property (Item 17 CL/13/84)
NOTED the decision taken by circulation to extend the capital budget and the process to acquire the property. Discussion was ongoing about the optimum use of space, parking facilities and transport provision.

8 ACADEMIC BOARD
RECEIVED the draft minutes of the Academic Board meeting 20 November 2013 (CL/13/90)

NOTED the discussion of a report on improving the experience of joint honours students.  

NOTED the discussion on a scheme supporting women through the promotion process. An explanation of the scheme to achieve better gender balance at professorial level was provided.

NOTED the agreement by Academic Board of the principle to extend teaching by one week, primarily to provide an opportunity for revision classes. Academic Board referred the implementation of the principle to Council because of the financial implications that different options would impose.

AGREED the proposal that whilst an additional week was needed it should not be taken out of the Summer vacation because of the financial implications on conference trade and the increased rents that students living in halls of residence would have to pay.

REQUIRED a broader view of student opinion to be sought before a final decision was taken by management, followed by consultation by e mail with Council to agree whether the Easter or Christmas vacation should be reduced by one week.

NOTED It was not possible to discuss issues raised by a member objecting to the recording of item 8 in the draft minutes of the Academic Board meeting as the member had an Equal pay claim against the College that was still in process.

9 STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS
RECEIVED a report from the Deputy Principal on the 2013 Admissions Cycle and plans for future recruitment and admissions (CL/13/71)

NOTED that the final student count would take place in the first week of December and the priorities for the next recruitment cycle would be produced.

10 THE ESTATES MASTERPLAN
APPROVED the process and timetable for completion and submission of the Estates Masterplan (CL/13/72)

NOTED that if outline planning permission was not accepted by Runnymede Council individual planning submissions would be required with the risk of a lengthening of timescales.

11 ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE
NOTED A declaration of interest from Mr David Spence. "As disclosed in November, I was a Partner until 2006 with the firm chosen to deliver the College's Internal Audit Service for the financial year 2012-13, and continue to undertake occasional ad hoc consultancy work with them. I excluded myself from the internal audit appointment (for 2013 onwards) and do not believe that this relationship has impaired my judgement in any way as Chairman of the Audit Committee. I feel it is appropriate to make this disclosure again as a matter of transparency"

11.1 NOTED the potential financial loss of £21K reported to HEFCE and the steps taken to mitigate any future loss (CL/13/73)
11.2 APPROVED for submission to HEFCE the report for 2012-2013 of the Audit and Compliance Committee (CL/13/74)

12 FINANCIAL MATTERS
12.1 Annual Accounts 2012-2013
RECEIVED the accounts 2012-2013 (CL/13/75)
DISCUSSED the improved student: staff ratio and questioning of the ratio compared to published data.
REQUIRED analysis of the definition of “staff” and the trends in student: staff ratios to the Finance Committee.
APPROVED the accounts 2012-2013 and the signing of the letter of representation.

12.2 Financial Forecast 2013-2014
RECEIVED the updated financial projection for 2013-14 and to approve the commentary and financial schedules to be submitted to HEFCE (CL/13/76)
NOTED the financial forecast and the impact on the budget of the shortfall in student numbers.
APPROVED the updated financial projection for 2013-14 and the commentary and financial schedules to be submitted to HEFCE.

13 MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY
13.1 NOTED the reported progress with Key Performance Indicators (CL/13/77)
REQUIRED the traffic light system to be improved with the addition of an explanatory note of the reason for confidence in a grade considered achievable.

13.2 RECEIVED the updated Strategic Risk Register (CL/13/78)

13.3 NOTED and AGREED the priority actions identified for implementing the new strategy during 2013/14 (CL/13/79). A full report would be provided to the June meeting of Council.

14 GOVERNANCE
14.1 APPROVED the definition of Chair’s action reflecting current practice (CL/13/80)

14.2 APPROVED communication with Council members (CL/13/81)

14.3 NOTED the Register of Council Interests 2013 (CL/13/82)

14.4 RECEIVED an update from the Project Board on the Council Effectiveness Review (CL/13/88)
REQUIRED an update at the next meeting.

14.5 RECEIVED: A tabled report of the proposed restructuring of the Students’ Union Sabbatical Officers’ roles CL/13/89)
DISCUSSED the reallocation of Sabbatical Officers’ portfolios to create a more balanced and manageable workload and the longer term proposal that the position of Student Union President be removed to create four Co-President positions.

NOTED the Student Union Constitution was not presented for approval at this meeting and the immediate removal of the position of Student Union President was not proposed. Council Statutes specify the President of the Student Union as an ex officio position.
AGREED the changes to re-allocate the duties of the Sabbatical Officers as proposed by the Student Union General meeting and changes of the Vice President role to Co-President. Any further changes to the Constitution must be proposed to the Council Executive Committee before presentation to the full Council. Council stated its preference for maintaining the leadership role of the President thus retaining him/her as ex officio a member of Council.

REQUIRED reassurance that all changes to the Student Union Constitution have gone through the proper procedures.

15 COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP
RECEIVED an update on progress with the recruitment of lay members (CL/13/83)

REQUIRED proposals for new members to be brought to the next meeting of Council.

16 REPORT OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE CHAIRMAN
None

17 REPORT OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY CIRCULATION
NOTED the decision taken by circulation of the request to extend the capital budget (CL/13/84)

18 PLANNING LETTER
NOTED the letter sent to the Principal (CL/13/85)

19 RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING MINUTES (CL/13/86)
Council Minutes 20 March 2013
Council Executive Committee meeting 23 September 2013
Nominations Committee meeting 2 October 2013
Council Executive Committee 23 October 2013
The Remuneration Committee 23 October 2013
The Finance Committee 25 October 2013
Audit and Compliance Committee 1 November 2013

20 NOTED THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES HAVE NOT MET SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF COUNCIL
Equality & Diversity Committee: To Note Christine Goodyear’s appointment as Chair
The Health and Safety Assurance Committee: To Note Gurpreet Dehal’s appointment

21 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS
NOTED that the following documents have been sealed since the last meeting:
8 November 2013; Licence to occupy Unit 23a, The Precinct, Egham
15 November 2013; Surrender of lease of 2 Gower Street, London.

22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS
APPROVED amendments to the Standing Orders of the Academic Board, agreed at its meeting 20 November 2013, with regards to the timing of elections.(CL/13/87)

23 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING
NOTED that the next meeting of Council will be held on Wednesday 19 March 2014 at 17.00 in MX034.
Royal Holloway, University of London
Council Meeting

Signed:

Mr Stephen Cox CVO
Chair of Council

Date