

ROYAL HOLLOWAY
University of London

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board, held on 16 March 2011

Present:	Professor P Layzell (In the Chair) Dr S Ansari Dr B Baker Professor P Beesley Professor C Bradley Professor P Bramley Dr G Bush-Bailey Professor R Deem Professor M Fowler Professor J Frank Dr N Gascoigne Ms L Gibbs Dr A Gupta Dr G Gutin Professor J Johnson Professor R Kemp	Professor K Normington Ms R Pearson Mr P Phillips Mr J Powell Dr R Pym Ms B Rowley Professor R Schack Dr A Sheppard Professor D Simon Ms S Simon Professor C Smith Mr J Tuck Professor R Walker Professor G Ward Dr N Widder Professor J Zanker
With:	Ms A Sendall (Secretary)	
In attendance:	Mr S Higman Ms S Kay Ms K Kerr Ms D Salsbury Ms E Wilkinson	Registrar and Director of Administration Head of Strategic Development College Secretary Academic Development Officer Head of College Careers Service
Apologies:	Mr J Brannan Dr G Bush-Bailey Professor J Davison Dr F Fordham Ms M Freeman Dr N Gascoigne	Dr P Leman Ms S Rahman Professor J Saunders Dr A Varty Dr D Waltham

1. MEMBERSHIP

The Board received the membership list (AB/11/01) and noted the apologies received by the Secretary in advance of the meeting. 11/001

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on **Thursday, 9 December 2010** (M 10/107 - M 10/148), were confirmed. 11/002

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute 10/121 – National Student Survey - The Board noted that the overall College return rate currently stands at 48%. The threshold for inclusion in the survey is 50% and the College is aiming for an overall return rate of 65%. Heads of Departments were asked to take action to increase their return rates, particularly those where return rates are presently low. 11/003

4. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE CHAIR

The Board noted that no actions have been taken by the Chair, on behalf of the Academic Board. 11/004

5. UNSTARRING OF ITEMS

There was no unstarring of items. 11/005

6. FORMAL REPORTS

6.1 Principal's Report

The funding letter from HEFCE had been received and though, as anticipated, there was a decrease in teaching and research funding the College had fared comparatively well against the sector. 11/006

In terms of future HEU student fees, these will need to be set at a level which will enable the College to offset funding cuts and to meet the additional costs associated with increased student expectation and widening access. HEU undergraduate student numbers are also capped, and there is a possibility that this number could be reduced by 10%, which would be an additional cost for the College. Analysis of the costs is being carried out by the Strategic Development unit. A proposed fee will be decided by mid April and submitted to the Office For Fair Access (OFFA). OFFA is due to respond to the proposed fee by mid July. 11/007

The Principal reported on an overseas visit he had made to strengthen existing relationships the College has with US institutions. There are opportunities for further collaboration, particularly through student exchanges, though the way the curriculum is structured at the College tends not to appeal to US students. Further development of these institutional links will continue to be explored. 11/008

The Principal and Deputy Principal had met with representatives from the Santander Group. Santander currently sponsor international students through International Excellence Scholarships as well as funding Choral Scholarships at the College. The Group is keen to develop opportunities for study abroad and internships and will act as brokers on behalf of the College. The Deputy Principal will be taking discussions forward. 11/009

The Dean of the Faculty of Science post is about to be advertised. Representatives from the Head-hunting firm are currently consulting with colleagues regarding the Vice Principal for Research and Enterprise post which will be advertised in due course. 11/010

6.2 Report from Council

The Board received the minutes from the meetings of the Council, held on 13 October 2010 (AB/11/02a) and 8 December 2010 (AB/11/02b). 11/011

7. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

- 7.1 The Board considered the report on student intake numbers for 2011-12 (AB/11/03), and noted the targets for the coming academic year. There had been a delay in confirming the targets due to HEFCE's late advice on student numbers, however, it had been confirmed that the Student Number Control Limit has been increased by 2% for 2011-12. 11/012
- 7.2 The Board considered the report on UG and PG applications received to date for admission in 2011 (AB/11/04). The report revealed that the total number of UG applications received compared with the same period last year has increased by 2%. UCAS figures show that applications across the sector have increased and the College is in line with competitor institutions. The total number of PGT applications received compared with the same period last year has increased significantly, by 22.3% and this had since increased to 33%. This contrasts to the decrease in PGR applications which at the time of the Academic Board meeting stood at 13.5%. 11/013
- 7.3 There was concern expressed at the backlog of applications which had developed in the Admissions Office which had resulted, in some cases, in significant delays in responding to applications. The Head of Admissions and UK Recruitment and the Registrar and Director of Operations acknowledged there had been an issue. The Registrar reported that measures were now in place to deal with the backlog and that longer term solutions were planned; notably, through the Student and Academic Services Review which had identified where efficiencies could be made in admissions processes. In line with the UCAS withdrawal of paper applications next year for UG applications, a paperless application system is to be developed for PG applications. 11/014

8. MANIFESTO 2011

- 8.1 The Board considered the Manifesto 2011 (AB/11/05) which had recently been published on the College website for consultation. The document sets out the framework for future discussions. The Principal explained that it should be read not as a strategic plan but as a broader working document which outlines 'the landscape' and the key issues which the College will need to address. The Manifesto would be regularly reviewed and would evolve over time. Attention was drawn to the summary of initiatives in Appendix 1. Colleagues were asked to note that the timeline for each initiative will vary though in general these span around a 4 year period. Where appropriate, project management structures will be established for activities. The Board was invited to comment on the document. The feedback would be reported to Council at its next meeting on 13 April and the updated document would be published on the intranet, where there would be a further opportunity for people to comment. The following points were noted: 11/015
- Table 2 (Future Characteristics of Royal Holloway) –
 - (i) The reference to life-long employment should also make explicit the aspects which are concerned with life-long education ie: that the focus is not solely on ensuring graduate employment but also on equipping students with critical thinking skills, for example;
 - (ii) Some characteristics had already been achieved by the College.
 - Research – It was acknowledged that the importance of research should be more explicitly captured in table 3 (Measures of Academic Sustainability) in order to emphasise the relationship between research and teaching, and furthermore that the need to make better use of time and space should also acknowledge the importance of enabling time for research.
 - Role of students – The President of the Students' Union welcomed the emphasis placed on the role of students and the student experience, which has been put at the heart of the Manifesto.
 - External collaboration – It was noted that the College will have to work in greater partnership with external providers such as other educational providers, research laboratories outside the HE sector, and business and industry. It was suggested that this might be further strengthened in the document to emphasise the ambition to improve links with industry as well as the role and impact of research partnerships. 11/016

- Institutional Positioning (paragraph 34) – It was felt that in view of encouraging widening access the College should be described as ‘world leading’ or ‘academically excellent’ rather than ‘academically elite’.

8.2 The Board endorsed the measures for academic sustainability set out in table 3 on page 9 of the Manifesto 2011. 11/017

9. ORGANISING FOR SUCCESS

9.1 The Board considered a paper on organisational change (AB/11/06). Colleagues were asked to note the considerable challenges facing the HE sector and the work the College would need to undertake over the next few years. The organisational changes are minor modifications to the structure in order to ensure the College is best able to carry out this work. The departments of the College have evolved since the faculties were first constructed and it has been recognised that departments have different issues to address. The structure of the College therefore must be able to support departments in their development. The changes to the faculties and senior team provide for this. In terms of the faculties, the main change is to recognise the development and growth pattern of the School of Management. On the VP team, the main change is to recognise the need to have a more student-facing role through the creation of a Vice-Principal for student experience. 11/018

9.2 There was some concern that it was not entirely clear how the new lines of management would work in practice, in particular the role of the Associate Dean, and that there could be a tendency for ‘over’ management and it was agreed clarification would be added to the paper. It was noted that further work is to be undertaken in relation to resource allocation, budget setting, and academic planning. It was also explained that the new roles in the senior team would be outward-facing and supportive. 11/019

9.3 The Board approved the proposed organisational changes subject to clarification in relation to the delegation of responsibilities in the new management structure, in particular the role of the Associate Deans, and how the revised structure relates to the overall academic vision. The proposals would be considered by Council at its next meeting on 13 April. 11/020

10. STUDENT AND ACADEMIC SERVICES REVIEW

The Board received an update on the progress of the Student and Academic Services Review (SASR) (AB/11/07). The Registrar thanked the Director of Strategic Development for her leadership and management of the project. The Director of Strategic Development reported that a set of core principles, protocols and processes would need to be in place in order to underpin structural changes and that these were in the process of being developed. A Service Review Team would be established for each workstream. Key processes had already been addressed in admissions, as mentioned in point 7. above, which would be in place for the next academic session. The paperless processing was already being piloted with thanks to Matthew Weller and Karl Billington for their support. Significant progress has also been made with the student mark entry database with thanks to Caroline Beck and Chris Chattam for their work. Training for the new marks system will take place on 5 April and 6 April. 11/021

11. SUBMISSION TO OFFA

The Board received the timetable and process for making a submission to OFFA on the proposed student fees to be charged for 2012-13 (AB/11/08). The College has until 19 April to submit its access agreement to OFFA. The access agreement will go to Council on 13 April for approval. OFFA will communicate its decision on 11 July. 11/022

12. INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT

The Board received an oral report from the Deputy Principal on the Institutional Audit by the QAA. The student and College submissions were sent to the Auditors by the deadline. The Head of Academic Development Services and her team were thanked for their work. Members of the Academic Board were also thanked for their comments on the draft Briefing Paper. A briefing visit by the Audit Team will take place between 29 and 31 March. By the end of the visit the Audit Team will have identified any additional documentation they wish to receive and the two departments on which an audit trail will be based. The departments chosen will be fully briefed and supported. The Principal thanked the Students' Union for their submission to the Auditors. Colleagues were reminded that the main Audit takes place 16-20 May. 11/023

13. RESEARCH DEGREES WORKING GROUP

The Board considered the report of the Research Degrees Working Group (AB/11/09). The Board approved the recommendations. The Principal thanked the Dean of HSS for her work in leading the group and its development of recommendations for enhancing the support and management of PGR students. 11/024

14. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The Board received a paper on changes to the Department of Health and Social Care (AB/11/10). It was noted that the Department had been through difficulties over recent years, however these had been overcome under the leadership of the current Head of Department. The Department has chosen to change its name to the Department of Social Work. The Board endorsed the changes. A formal launch for the newly-named department will be planned. 11/025

15. PROGRESS REPORTS AND REVIEW

15.1 The Board considered the report, together with the Action Plan arising from the Periodic Departmental Review of the Music Department which took place in November 2010 (AB/11/11a,b). The Deputy Principal who chaired the PDR Panel Music Department reported that the Review had established that the department was particularly strong in a number of areas with notable commendations for the redesign of the curriculum, the excellent relationship between students and staff, the effective personal tutoring scheme, and the integration of PGR and PGT students into the departmental research culture. The recommendations for the College were noted. The issue of research space for PGR students will be considered by the appropriate committees, the need for high quality performance space will be considered as part of the planning process, and the requirement for enhanced IT support has been raised with the Director of IT. The Principal congratulated the Head of Music and his colleagues for an excellent review. Monitoring of the action plan would be carried out by the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee, rather than the Academic Development Committee as in previous years. 11/026

15.2 (i) The Board noted that the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee had reviewed the reports of the Faculties' scrutiny of the departmental annual review of undergraduate programmes for 2009-10, at its meeting on 2 March 2011. 11/027

(ii) The Board noted the summary of the good practice identified (AB/11/12), which will be considered at the Faculty Teaching Groups. 11/028

16. ACADEMIC APPEALS

The Board received a report on the student academic appeals in relation to the 2008-09 academic year and noted the comparative data from the previous two years (AB/11/13). A report in relation to the 2009-10 would be considered at the June Academic Board meeting and there would be an annual report on student academic appeals and complaints to the summer term Academic Board meeting in future years. 11/029

17. REGULATIONS REVIEW GROUP

17.1 The Board received an oral report from the Deputy Principal. A number of substantial areas had been identified for review over the coming academic year. The Group had agreed to focus this year on regulations which need modifying, primarily in cases where a number of waivers to regulations have had to be granted. A number of changes will be brought to the next Academic Board meeting. 11/030

17.2 One of the key issues for consideration will be the possibility of offering September Resits to second and final year students. The cost to students of having to repeat a year in light of the increase in fees created a strong rationale for reviewing the current policy of only offering September Resits to first-year students. The President of the Students' Union confirmed that she felt that there was compelling case for making September Resits available for all years. It was noted that the College was out of line with majority of the sector by not offering resits for all years of the undergraduate programme. Whilst there was full support from some members, there was concern expressed by others at the potential increase in workload for departments. Colleagues who had concerns about extending September Resits were asked to outline their concerns to the Deputy Principal. 11/031

18. NOMINATIONS FOR STATUTE 25 PANELS

18.1 The Board approved the members of staff nominated by the Faculties to serve on Statute 25 Panels (AB/11/14). 11/032

18.2 The Board approved the proposal to extend the list of staff who can serve on Statute 25 Panels to include members of academic staff who have attended the College's Leadership Programme in order to broaden the pool of staff who can be called upon to sit on such panels as necessary. 11/033

STARRED ITEMS

19. ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Board received the minutes from the meetings of the Academic Development Committee held on 30 November 2010 (AB/11/15a) and 25 January 2011 (AB/11/15b). 11/034

20. FACULTY BOARDS

The Board received a combined report from the meetings of the Faculty Boards held in February 2011 (AB/11/16). 11/035

21. DEPARTMENTAL GRANTS

The Board noted that the November meeting of the Departmental Grants Group was cancelled. 11/036

22. INFORMATION SERVICES ADVISORY GROUP

The Board received the minutes of the meeting of the Information Services Advisory Group (ISAG) held on 1 December 2010 (AB/11/17), and noted that the meeting scheduled for this term has been cancelled. 11/037

23. RESEARCH

The Board received the report from the meetings of the Research Committee held on 14 December 2010 and 13 January 2011 (AB/11/18). 11/038

24. LEARNING, TEACHING & QUALITY COMMITTEE

The Board received the report from the meetings of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee held on 26 January and 2 March 2011 (AB/11/19). 11/039

25. STUDENTS' UNION

The Board noted the results of the February 2011 elections for sabbatical officers of the Students' Union for 2011-12 (AB/11/20). 11/040

26. HONORARY TITLES

26.1 The Board approved the proposal to confer the Honorary Title of Visiting Professor on Professor Andrei Seryi, from the Department of Physics (AB/11/21). 11/041

26.2 The Board noted a paper on the conferral of honorary titles (AB/11/22). 11/042

27. PUBLICATION

27.1 The Board agreed that no papers require broad dissemination around the College. 11/043

27.2 The Board confirmed that no papers required exemption from the Freedom of Information Act requirements. 11/044

28. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, 1 June 2011 at 3pm in MX001 11/045

Ms A Sendall
Head of Academic Development Services
4 April 2011