

ROYAL HOLLOWAY
University of London

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board, held on 1 June 2011

- Present: Professor P Layzell (In the Chair) Professor C Nobes (for Professor C Smith)
Dr S Ansari Professor K Normington
Dr B Baker Ms R Pearson
Professor P Beesley Mr P Phillips
Professor C Bradley Dr R Pym
Professor P Bramley Ms S Rahman
Professor J Davison Ms B Rowley
Professor R Deem Prof J Saunders
Dr F Fordham Professor R Schack
Professor M Fowler Dr A Sheppard
Professor J Frank Professor D Simon
Dr N Gascoigne Ms S Simon
Dr A Gupta Mr J Tuck
Professor J Johnson Professor G Ward
Professor A Johnstone Dr N Widder
Professor R Kemp Professor J Zanker
Dr P Leman
- With: Ms A Sendall (Secretary),
- In attendance: Ms K Blow SU Vice President (Education & Welfare) Elect
Dr A Graham Academic Development Officer
Mr S Higman Registrar and Director of Administration
Ms S Kay Head of Strategic Development
Mr D Lemberger Cooper SU President Elect
- Apologies: Ms L Gibbs
Ms S Honeycombe
Professor C Smith
Dr R Walker
Dr D Waltham
Ms E Wilkinson

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Board received the membership list (AB/11/23) and noted the apologies received by the Secretary in advance of the meeting. 11/046
- 1.2 The Board noted that this was the last meeting before the current term of office expired for the following *Ex Officio*, Representative and Elected members: 11/047
Professor Philip Beesley, Dean of the Faculty of Science;
Professor Peter Bramley, Head of School of Biological Sciences;
Professor Gregory Gutin, Head of Department of Computer Science;
Professor David Simon, Head of Department of Geography;
Professor John Saunders, Head of Department of Physics;
Professor Johannes Zanker, Head of Department of Psychology;

Professor Clare Bradley, Elected member;
Dr Bruce Baker, Elected member.

- 1.3 The Board noted that Ms Rachel Pearson, Ms Beth Rowley and Ms Sarah Rahman, were due to demit on 31 July 2011. The new Students' Union sabbatical officers, Mr Daniel Lemberger Cooper, Ms Katie Blow and Ms Sarah Honeycombe, who will formally take their place on the Board in 2011/12, had been invited to attend the meeting as observers. The Board also noted that the Secretary was attending her last meeting before a period of maternity leave. 11/048
- 2. MINUTES**
- The Minutes of the meeting held on **Wednesday, 16 March 2011** (M 11/001 - M 11/045), were confirmed. 11/049
- 3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**
- There were no matters arising from the Minutes. 11/050
- 4. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE CHAIR**
- The Board noted that no actions had been taken by the Chair, on behalf of the Academic Board. 11/051
- 5. UNSTARRING OF ITEMS**
- There was no unstarring of items. 11/052
- 6. FORMAL REPORTS**
- 6.1 Principal's Report
The College Council had agreed a fee of £9,000 per annum for HEU students from 2012-13, although this was still subject to approval by the Office for Fair Access. The College's access agreement was due to be submitted to OFFA next month and details of the package would be circulated to members of the Board. Rob Kemp and his colleagues were thanked for drawing up the proposal for OFFA. The slides associated with the student fee which were presented at the Staff Open Meeting on 1 June would be circulated to AB members. 11/053
- The Government is currently exploring possible schemes to allow for some easing of the cap on home students. The College would be broadly in favour of a moderate expansion though the increased pressure on resources would be taken into account. 11/054
- The main visit of the Institutional Audit took place 16-20 May. All those involved with the Audit were thanked, including the staff and students who met with the Audit team during the two visits. This was covered by a separate item on the agenda (*vide infra*). 11/055
- The Principal and a number of senior colleagues had recently returned from China where a number of alumni events had been held in Beijing and Shanghai with 150 and 80 students, respectively, in attendance. The events were very successful and had generated much good will, including a partnership agreement with Renmin University which was signed during the visit. The Director of Royal Holloway International was thanked for organising the events. 11/056
- 6.2 Report from Council
The Board received the minutes from the meeting of the Council, held on 26 January 2011 (AB/11/24). 11/057
- 7. STUDENT RECRUITMENT**
- The Board considered a report on UG and PG applications received to date for admission in 11/058

2011 (AB/11/25). The report revealed that undergraduate applications had increased by *ca* 2.5 % from the equivalent point during last academic year. Notably, there had been a significant increase in the number of applicants who had declined their Unconditional offer, though the numbers were not as severe as the national trend. The reasons for this were not clear.

It was noted that there had been problems in dealing with applications so far, particularly for postgraduate programmes and measures had been put in place to ameliorate the situation. These measures had led to an increase in the number of decisions that had been processed so far in 2011 against the equivalent point in 2010. There was some concern expressed at perceived delays in the processing of applications for PhD programmes and it was confirmed this was under investigation. There was also some anxiety over a backlog of unopened Emails that had built up in the Admissions Inbox, however, this situation was currently being dealt with. 11/059

8. STUDENT AND ACADEMIC SERVICES REVIEW

The Board received a written paper on progress in the Student and Academic Services Review from the Head of Strategic Development (AB/11/26). This was an update on current developments and a full briefing would follow at a later date. Applications are to switch to an online, paperless, system from 2011-12, a year ahead of a similar change by UCAS. Colleagues in Admissions and IT would be providing a briefing for staff in academic departments on the new system. 11/060

9. INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT

The Deputy Principal reported on the recently completed Institutional Audit visit by the Quality Assurance Agency. This was one of the very last audits to be carried out under the current system since the next round of visits would follow a new method. The outcome was not yet known; although it was hoped the result would be communicated to College at the end of the current week. Thanks were due to all colleagues who had participated in the Audit, particularly to the Head of Academic Development Services. The Principal expressed his thanks to the Deputy Principal. 11/061

10. ORGANISING FOR SUCCESS (PART 2)

The Board considered a paper proposing changes to the academic and management committee structure (AB/11/27). These in part arose from concerns over the separation of the consideration of academic matters (at Academic Development Committee) and resourcing implications (at Resources Sub-Group) when seeking to expand the College's portfolio of programmes. This would be addressed by the creation of a single Planning and Resource Committee which, with various sub-committees would make decisions in a more joined-up fashion. A Professional Services Review Committee would allow oversight and accountability for service departments. An Academic Board Executive Committee would strengthen the links between Departmental Boards and the Academic Board and help identify common issues across the College. 11/062

Additionally, a Collaborative Provisions Committee is to be formed which would strengthen College's processes for developing and monitoring collaborative provision in preparation for the likely increase in academic developments of this nature. Such programmes would need scrutiny outside the normal departmental and faculty processes. The new committee would oversee the development of formal agreements, the monitoring of students and the quality of provision at the partner organisation, as well as be responsible for reviewing the strategic aims and achievements of the collaboration. 11/063

It was suggested that the Postgraduate Research Students Committee should also include a number of Director of Graduate Studies from the three faculties. The Graduate School Forum would feed into this Committee. It was noted that details in terms of membership would be finalised as part of the implementation of the new committee structure. The Board approved the proposed changes to the College committee structure. 11/064

11. EXECUTIVE, ELECTRONIC AND EXTERNAL PROGRAMMES

The Board discussed a paper from the Deputy Principal concerning E3P (AB/11/28). This body will be replaced by a management board which will report to the newly established Collaborative Provisions Committee (*vide supra*). This would rectify the current gap in institutional oversight for programmes delivered by the University of London International Programmes system and help with the diversification of income streams by means of Distance Learning. The new model will ensure that there are consistent policies. It will also address the issue of staff contracts; issuing a single contract in future rather than multiple contracts which is currently the case. It is also intended that permanent members of staff involved in DL provision will be moved onto departmental workloads. It was acknowledged that departments differ in their workload model with respect to DL and this would be recognised in the new regime. Heads of Departments would be asked to review staff workloads, for those involved in DL, with Programme Directors and representatives from Human Resources, as appropriate. The Deputy Principal offered to meet with Heads of Department individually if there were particularly issues for which his advice would be helpful. The Board approved the proposal. 11/065

12. REGULATIONS REVIEW GROUP

The Board discussed the final proposals of the Regulations Review Group arising from its meetings in 2011-12 (AB/11/29). The members of the group (Head of Academic Development Services, Assistant Registrar, three Deputy Deans (Teaching) and three faculty representatives- Dr S Blackburn, Dr E Clark and Dr R Hawley) were thanked and congratulated for their hard work in developing the proposals for regulatory change. The Annex to the paper listed proposed new College regulations that had been approved by the Faculty Boards in May. The Board approved these regulations, noting that proposal 10 (thesis embargo) should state that a student's supervisor should sign off a two-year embargo without justification and that a supervisor should be able to request a longer period for commercial reasons. It was also noted that minor alterations to wording of proposals 15 and 17 (MSci and BSc awards) had been made to improve clarity. 11/066

The paper also presented additional proposed changes to regulations, in response to issues raised by departments, which had not been approved by the Faculty Boards. The Board approved the change to terminology relating to core, compulsory and core (pass required) courses, noting that the postponement of the effective date of this change until September 2012 would not conflict with the other changes since this was merely a change in labelling. 11/067

The Board also approved proposals to allow any non-final year student the potential opportunity for a summer resit examination, noting opposition from two departments, but acknowledging that this situation was the prevailing one in other HEIs. It was noted that the wording would need to be checked to ensure that a student who was forced to change registration from an MSci to a BSc degree would also be able to resit before the start of the next academic year. The management of the system for setting additional papers for resits would be left to individual departments' discretion. 11/068

The Board approved the proposed replacement of the current regulation covering the course outcome of Allowed with an expanded set of regulations on extenuating circumstances. It was noted that the 'Allowed' outcome may not be Bologna-compliant. This would be checked. Lastly, the Board approved amended regulations relating to satisfying attendance and assessment requirements of courses, including the removal of the outcome of Incomplete. It was noted that there was little scope for major change in this area until a College attendance policy had been agreed, but that the Deputy Deans (Teaching) had agreed to expedite the process of agreeing changes to course specifications for 2011-12 so that course requirements are made clear to students. 11/069

13. PERIODIC DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

The Board considered the report and action plan arising from the recent Periodic Departmental Review of the Department of Politics and International Relations (including European Studies) (AB/11/30a & b). This had been approved by the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee 11/070

at its meeting in May. It was reported that the review had been especially positive. The Head of Department and Departmental staff were congratulated. The Board was asked to note in particular the commendation for the high quality of teaching and supervision, the plans for development of internships at undergraduate level, and the attractive and successful PGT programme portfolio.

In the action plan, it was highlighted that a programme board to enhance the management of the European Studies programme would be set up. Furthermore, College proposals to improve the experience of Joint Honours students by designating single points of contact for each programme would also help satisfy the PDR panel's recommendations. The proposed College review of the internal financial model for the European Studies programme would be carried out by a working group chaired by the Vice-Principal (Planning and Resources) with representation from Finance, PIR and other academic departments involved with the programme. 11/071

14. STAFF-STUDENT COMMITTEE CONSTITUTION

The Board received and endorsed proposed enhanced guidelines for the operation of staff-student committees which had been agreed at the meeting of Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee in May (AB/11/31). It was noted that the process for electing student representatives differed between departments and that further guidance would be issued after LTQC had considered feedback from the Students' Union at its meeting in July. 11/072

15. STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

The Board received a report on the student academic appeals in relation to the academic year 2009-10 (AB/11/32). It was noted that a very low percentage of students appealed against their results and that a small percentage of submitted appeals were on the grounds of administrative error or failure to follow procedures. 11/073

16. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF ACADEMIC BOARD

Colleagues were asked to note that the effectiveness of the Academic Board would be reviewed over the summer. Views would be sought on the structure of the agenda and as to whether the Board should have a major focus at each meeting, for example on student welfare, career support or academic student support. 11/074

STARRED ITEMS

17. ANNUAL REVIEW OF POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMMES FOR 2009-10

The Board noted that the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee considered the reports of the Faculties' scrutiny of the departmental annual review of postgraduate taught programmes for 2009-10, at its meeting on 11 May 2011. The Board also received a summary of the good practice identified (AB/11/33). 11/075

18. ANNUAL REVIEW OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMMES FOR 2009-10

The Board noted that the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee considered the reports of the Faculties' scrutiny of the departmental annual review of postgraduate research programmes for 2009-10, at its meeting on 11 May 2011. The Board also received a summary of the good practice identified (AB/11/34). 11/076

19. REVIEW OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

The Board noted the report of the findings of the national working group on the role of external examiners published in April 2011 (AB/11/35). This had been received by the Faculty Boards and detailed scrutiny was being carried out by the Learning, Teaching and 11/077

Quality Committee.

20. ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Board received the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Development Committee held on 21 March 2011 (AB/11/36). 11/078

21. FACULTY BOARDS

The Board received a combined report from the meetings of the Faculty Boards held in May 2011 (AB/11/37). 11/079

22. DEPARTMENTAL GRANTS

The Board received the minutes from the meeting of the Departmental Grants Group held on 14 February 2011 (AB/11/38). 11/080

23. RESEARCH

The Board received the report from the meeting of the Research Committee held on 16 February 2011 (AB/11/39). 11/081

24. LEARNING, TEACHING & QUALITY COMMITTEE

The Board received the report from the meeting of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee held on 11 May 2011 (AB/11/40). 11/082

25. HONORARY TITLES

26.1 The Board approved the proposal to confer the Honorary Title of Visiting Professors on: Professor Glenn R Shafer, from the Department of Computer Science (AB/11/41a); Dr Annaclara Cataldi Palau, from the Department of History (AB/11/41b); Professor David Shemmings, from the Department of Health and Social Care (AB/11/41c). 11/083

26.2 The Board noted a paper on the conferral of honorary titles (AB/11/42). 11/084

27. PUBLICATION

27.1 The Board agreed that no papers required broad dissemination around the College. 11/085

27.2 The Board confirmed that no papers needed exemption from the Freedom of Information Act requirements. 11/086

28. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, 2 November 2011 at 3pm in MX001 11/087

Ms A Sendall
Head of Academic Development Services
June 2011