

ROYAL HOLLOWAY
University of London

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board, held on 29 May 2013

Present:	Professor P Layzell (In the Chair) Professor S Ansari Mr K Aruwa Dr B Baker Professor C Bradley Professor B Cowan Professor R Deem Professor J Fiadeiro Professor A Gange Mr D German Professor D Gilbert Mr J Green Dr J Hughes Professor A Kahane Professor R Kemp	Professor P Leman Dr J McKee Professor J Morgan Professor K Normington Professor B O'Keefe Professor J Powell Professor D Rebellato Professor A Sheppard Ms S Simon Professor M Spagat Mr J Tuck Professor J Unerman Professor A Varty Professor N Widder Professor J Zanker
With:	Ms A Sendall (Secretary)	
In attendance:	Dr A Bradshaw Mr S Higman Mrs D Salsbury Mr A Singh	Trade Union Observer (UCU) Registrar and Secretary Academic Development Officer SU President Elect
Apologies:	Ms S Bertrand-Shelton Dr F Fordham Dr N Gascoigne Ms L Gibbs Dr A Gupta Professor P Hogg Professor J Johnson Ms J Roberts Professor J Wann Ms S Waud Ms E Wilkinson	

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Board received the list of members of the Board (AB/13/18) and noted apologies. 13/045
- 1.2 The Board welcomed Professor Michael Spagat, as Head of Department of Economics, to his first meeting as a Representative member. 13/046
- 1.3 The Board noted that this was the last meeting before the current terms of office expire for the following Representative and Elected members: 13/047
Professor Sarah Ansari, Head of Department of History;
Dr Anna Gupta, Head of Department of Social Work;
Professor Julian Johnson, Head of Department of Music;

Professor Nathan Widder, Head of Department of Politics and International Relations;
 Professor Johannes Zanker, Elected Member of Academic Board to serve on Council;
 Dr Neil Gascoigne, Elected Member;
 Dr Finn Fordham, Elected Member;
 Professor Jane Davison, Elected Member;
 Professor Patrick Leman, Elected Member.

The Board thanked them for their contribution to Academic Board.

- 1.4 The Board noted that Mr Doug German and Mr Kenny Aruwa demit on 31 July 2013, and Mr Jamie Green has been re-elected for a second term. The Board thanked them for their contribution to Academic Board. The new Students' Union sabbatical officers, Mr Amarbeer Singh and Miss Sidonie Bertrand-Shelton (in absentia), who will formally take their place on the Board in 2013-14 and had been invited to attend as observers, were welcomed. 13/048

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on **Wednesday, 6 March 2013** (M 13/001 - M 13/044) were confirmed as an accurate record. 13/049

3. MATTERS ARISING

Item 17, Research Committee minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2012, M 13/041 13/050

One member of the Board commented that she did not agree that the 4-5% overall percentage difference in favour of males who were eligible for the REF was not significant and requested the minutes be amended. It was agreed that the appropriate action was to ask the Vice-Principal (Research) to respond directly to the Board member.

4. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE CHAIR

The Board noted that no actions had been taken by the Principal, on behalf of the Academic Board. 13/051

5. UNSTARRING OF ITEMS

There was no unstarring of items. 13/052

6. FORMAL REPORTS

6.1 Principal's Report

The Board received a written report from the Principal (AB/13/19). The Principal highlighted the following:

A level Reform - The Secretary of State for Education has taken a number of actions in relation to A-Level reform, including the decoupling of the AS qualification from A level, as well as increasing HE involvement and ownership of the A-Level curriculum. The Secretary of State initially wanted the Russell Group universities to endorse the newly-designed A-Levels. However, it is likely that curriculum will be agreed by the Examination Boards with input from across HE and some of the College's academic staff have been in discussions with A level boards already. 13/053

Doctoral Training Funding - The recent success in attracting funding for Doctoral Training was highlighted, in particular the funding awarded to the Information Security Group to create a Centre for Doctoral Training. 13/054

Development of Estate – The new theatre for the Drama Department was celebrated. Work will commence on the Boiler House which will include converting the Boiler Room into a 250-seat lecture theatre which should be available from September 2013. 13/055

Staff News - Cheryl Newsome has been appointed as Director of Human Resources and will join the institution from 1 July 2013. The Director of Estates, Stephen Bland, has 13/056

announced his retirement at the end of the year. An opportunity to say farewell to Stephen will be organised.

6.2 Reports from the Deputy Principal and the Vice-Principals

The Deputy Principal reported on the following:

- (i) The outline of the College Strategic Plan which was reported on at the previous Academic Board meeting has been further developed taking into consideration comments made by the Board. The Plan will be considered by Council at its meeting in June with the Plan becoming operational from the summer. 13/057
- (ii) An Estates Masterplan is being developed for submission to Runnymede Borough Council later in the year. A number of discussions have already taken place and a wider consultation will be conducted over the summer involving staff and students. 13/058
- (iii) The access agreement that the College has with OFFA has been approved for the last few years. However, the access agreement for 2013-14 has not been automatically endorsed. OFFA has stated that institutions should spend a greater proportion of funds on outreach activities and less on bursaries. The College, however, considers that a large proportion of funds should be spent on student support, such as bursaries, and moreover, the principles upon which the College's OFFA policy is based have been endorsed by the Students' Union. In view of this, a response has been made to OFFA explaining that it would be inappropriate to make changes to the agreed policy at this stage of the year and that a series of discussions will take place next year with staff and students to review the terms of the access agreement. 13/059

In response to a query about the status of the lease of the Gower Street building, the Deputy Principal reported that the College is still in discussions with the University of London. 13/060

The Vice-Principal (Education) reported on the following:

- (i) One of the measures of the Key Information Set (KIS) data is contact hours, and this year departments will be encouraged to ensure that all activities which can be classed as contact hours with students, such as dissertation supervision, are included. Compared with other members of the 1994 Group and the Russell Group the College's term length is short. It is also out of line with the sector that the College does not make more use of the summer term. Both these issues contribute to the generally low contact hours the College has in comparison to similar institutions. In view of this, a working group will be set up to consider whether the summer term could be lengthened, to include exam revision weeks and teaching for first and second year students after the exam period. 13/061
- (ii) A working group has been developing a PhD by publication. This would bring the College in line with other members of the 1994 Group and the Russell Group which already offer the award. It is anticipated that a paper detailing the proposal will be brought to the next meeting of Academic Board. 13/062

The Vice-Principal (External Engagement) reported on the following:

The Royal Holloway Passport award has been very successful and will be extended to include more activities. The Principal had emailed Heads of Departments to invite proposals for new activities to extend the scope of the Passport. It was noted that not all Departments have engaged with the Passport initiative, although students were keen to participate. Members of the Board were invited to contact the Vice-Principal (External Engagement) and Dean (Management and Economics) or the Head of Careers Service with ideas for the Passport. 13/063

The Vice-Principal (Staffing) reported on the following:

Professorial Banding cases were currently being considered. She noted also that the length 13/064

of time taken to consider academic promotions (at all levels) can be very slow because of poor response times to requests for references, as a result of which the process will be reviewed.

6.3 Report from the Council

The Board received the minutes of the Council meetings held on 23 November 2012 (AB/13/20). 13/065

7. **ACADEMIC BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

The Board considered a paper recommending amendments to the membership of Academic Board (AB/13/21). The paper proposed how the current shortfall of ex-officio and elected members might be addressed. The Registrar and Secretary explained that the Statute on the composition of Academic Board was difficult to interpret and to operationalise. The Statute differentiated representative members from elected and ex officio members, though the rationale for this is not clear. Furthermore, if the member elected to sit on Council by Academic Board is a representative member it potentially creates the need for a replacement for this member of staff on Academic Board as his/her role will have changed. 13/066

The terms of office of the member elected by Academic Board to sit on Council and of four of the five members elected by the academic teaching staff and senior research staff, are due to expire in September 2013. The Secretary of Academic Board will contact all academic staff before the autumn term seeking nominations for elected members of Academic Board. If more nominations are received than vacancies an election will be run. The number of elected members will need to be adjusted in order to redress the present imbalance in membership of Academic Board. The Registrar and Secretary informed the Board that the final decision on changes to the composition of Academic Board rests with Council, and that the recommendations of the Board would be presented to Council in June. Since the Registrar and Secretary was a proposed new ex-officio member in the paper, he left the meeting in order to withdraw from the discussion. 13/067

A concern was raised regarding the proposal that the Registrar and Secretary become an ex-officio member since the Registrar and Secretary was already present at Academic Board meetings as an invited observer. It was pointed out that it was anomalous to not have the most senior member of the professional services as a member of the Board when other members of these services, reporting to the Registrar and Secretary, are already members. 13/068

It was suggested that the proposal to include a staff member with a particular professional commitment to teaching should be expanded to include other underrepresented academic staff, such as newly appointed staff or contract research staff. The matter would be referred to the working group which is reviewing Academic Board. 13/069

The Board agreed that the proposal should be submitted to Council for consideration with the addition of the rationale for proposing the Registrar and Secretary as an ex-officio member. 13/070

8. **STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY**

The Board received a report of good practice that has been identified in departments for promoting student employability (AB/13/22). The Vice-Principal (External Engagement) and Dean (Management and Economics) reported that the statistics on the employment of the College's graduates had been disappointing, and a working group had been set up to address the issue. The extent and type of employability related activities in departments varies, however, three areas have been identified as particularly successful. Departments were strongly encouraged to consider developing these three activities: (i) sessions with alumni, (ii) internships and placements, and (iii) skills provision. Student comments reinforced the desire for these activities. However, they are concerned that the College does not start employability activities early enough, with generally an 18 month gap between attending an open day where they are informed about the activities, and when the activities 13/071

actually begin at the start of their second year. In view of this, the report proposes that departments should begin employability activities during the first year. Students also reported that the lack of funding to cover costs is a barrier to student engagement with internships. It has been agreed with the Head of Alumni Development to set a target of raising £1million to support student costs associated with internships.

The report also identified the importance of building relationships with organisations that expose students to job opportunities. Consequently, the College would be building and expanding these relationships. The College will also review and extend the Passport to include some reflective elements. The Board endorsed the report. 13/072

9. STUDENT DISCIPLINE

The Board considered a report from the Registrar and Secretary on the number of students facing disciplinary action (AB/13/23). The issues in relation to student retention and performance had been explored at a Senior Management Team Away Day. The report highlights a number of ideas which are to be taken forward, in particular: (i) addressing the lack of strong community feel on campus by developing social space in halls alongside a formal programme of events; (ii) piloting a pre-entry day in September 2013 to help manage student expectations and explain academic and non-academic standards of conduct; (iii) developing an online toolkit for personal advisers; (iv) facilitating attendance monitoring more effectively; and (v) establishing a structure to support the non-learning aspects of the student experience. 13/073

10. STUDENT ATTENDANCE MONITORING POLICY

The Board received the proposed student attendance monitoring policy to take effect from 2013-14 (AB/13/24). The Vice-Principal (Education) reported that it was agreed by the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (LTQC) that the College should have a policy. The policy states a College-wide minimum attendance requirement of at least 80%. Including the word 'normally' would allow Departments to determine the activities to which this would apply as well as enabling flexibility where appropriate. The policy sets out the principles which should be applied to practice and which are designed primarily to enable students who are encountering difficulties to be identified early on. It was pointed out that the word 'consecutive' in paragraph 4.3a of the policy was misleading as it would not address students who missed alternate weeks. It was agreed this should be removed. The Board approved the student attendance monitoring policy subject to this amendment. 13/074

11. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The Board considered a report on UG and PG conversion together with the arrangements for confirmation and clearing in 2013 (AB/13/25). The Deputy Principal expressed his gratitude for the significant amount of work undertaken by academic departments and professional services on student recruitment. However, the position on UG admissions had not been as successful as hoped, with not enough combined C/F and U/F students to meet targets for 2013 entry. Historically the College has only gained students from about two thirds of firm choice applicants. A lot more work needs to be done on student applications and conversion as the College cannot afford to allow this trend to continue. Furthermore, the College will be reviewing all aspects in relation the student recruitment and it is likely there may have to be fundamental changes. 13/075

The Principal conveyed his gratitude to the Deans who had scrutinised the data produced by the Strategic Development Unit to determine which institutions are the College's main competitors. It was acknowledged that the way the College communicates and engages with students and the timeliness of decisions is crucial. It was queried how the College could position itself against the Russell Group with many applicants being encouraged to focus on the Russell Group universities. It was noted that it is not uncommon for people to think the College is a Russell Group university. The Head of the School of Biological Sciences reported that since the School had switched to sending interview invitations by email instead of posting paper invitations the number of 13/076

responses had declined significantly. The School would revert to sending invitations by letter. In response to a question whether there were any contingencies plans in place for confirmation and clearing this August, the Deputy Principal reported that he would be discussing this with departments.

The Deputy Principal reported that it is still early in the admissions cycle for PGT and PGR applications. However, efforts must be made in converting PGT applications to compensate for the shortfall in UG conversion. 13/077

12. REGULATIONS WORKING GROUP

12.1 The Board approved changes to the academic regulations for 2013-14 including changes to Postgraduate Taught Regulations (AB/13/26). 13/078

12.2. The Board received proposed changes to the UG Progression and Award Requirements for 2014-15 entrants (AB/13/27). The Vice-Principal (Education) explained that the proposed changes were to address the concern that the College is out of line with its competitors by not having the expectation that students should pass all their course units. Furthermore, two of the three faculties had requested that the first year be weighted. Whilst it would not be possible to do this without the agreement of all three faculties, the revised regulations address the need to increase the importance of the first year. The two key differences of the new regulations are: (i) the expectation that students should pass everything, and (ii) the possibility for marginal fails to be condoned. The proposed new regulations would be introduced for new UG students registering for the first time in 2014-15 which would allow the necessary preparation for implementation. One member of the board asked if students could be asked to resit all failed resits in the summer rather than the minimum required for progression. It was noted that this would not be possible particularly as there had been overwhelming feedback from departments that only the minimum number of summer resits should be required in order to permit progression. The Board approved the changes to the UG Progression and Award Requirements for 2014-15 entrants. 13/079

13. CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

The Board received a proposal to establish a Centre for Professional Studies (CPS) (AB/13/28). The Deputy Principal explained that the CPS would be a new unit set up within the College to deliver applied- and practice-based professional taught programmes which do not belong to a particular academic discipline. The first programme to be delivered by the CPS will be the MSc in Project Management, which has been recruiting well. The academic standards and quality assurance will be monitored by the Science Faculty Board. The proposal had recommended that the Director of CPS would become a member of Academic Board; however, the Deputy Principal confirmed that this was no longer being proposed. The Board approved the proposal to establish a Centre for Professional Studies. 13/080

14. PERIODIC DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

14.1 The Board considered the Periodic Departmental Review report, together with the Action Plan following the School of Management Periodic Departmental Review held in March 2012 (AB/13/29). It was recognised that the School of Management had already addressed some of the comments and had responded positively. The Vice-Principal (Education) noted that point (xii) of the action plan did not explain how Distance Learning courses would be realigned with on-campus courses. The Head of the School of Management responded that this had been discussed at the School's Teaching and Learning Committee and the Distance Learning courses would be revalidated for 2014. The Vice-Principal (Education) confirmed this addressed the matter satisfactorily. 13/081

14.2 The Board considered the Periodic Departmental Review report, together with the Action Plan following the Department of Psychology Periodic Departmental Review held in May 2012 (AB/13/30). 13/082

15. STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

The Board received a report on the student academic appeals and complaints in relation to the 2011-12 academic session from the Head of Academic Development (AB/13/31). The Academic Registrar reported that whilst the number of appeals remained comparably low in comparison to the size of the student body, cases were becoming increasingly complex. The time academic staff spend with students in discussing their results is a key factor in maintaining the relatively low number of academic appeals. Of more concern, however, is the number of cases which are referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) which is disproportionately high in comparison to other institutions. There is some evidence that institutions which allow for face to face meetings with students in their appeal processes have fewer cases referred to the OIA. Discussions are taking place with the Deputy College Secretary to consider how mediation might be included in the process. 13/083

16. HONORARY DEGREES

The Board considered recommendations for the conferral of Honorary Degrees in 2014 (AB/13/32). The Registrar and Secretary explained that a single nomination had been received so far. The Secretariat depends on nominations from academic departments. Nominations would be reopened and the Registrar and Secretary appealed to Heads of Departments and elected academics to nominate people with whom the College should be honouring and would wish to build a relationship. The Board supported the recommendation received prior to final approval by Council at its meeting on 26 June 2013. 13/084

STARRED ITEMS

17. PROPOSED CHANGES TO CONSTITUTIONS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Board noted the minor amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Academic Board Executive Committee needed further clarification (AB/13/33). The corrected Terms of Reference will be presented to the next meeting of Academic Board for approval. 13/085

18. PUBLICATION

18.1 The Board agreed that no papers required broad dissemination around the College. 13/086

18.2 The Board confirmed that the following paper was exempt from Freedom of Information Act requirements: AB/13/32. 13/087

19. WINTER GRADUATION CEREMONIES

The Board noted that Winter Graduation Ceremonies for postgraduate students will be held again this December. 13/088

20. ANNUAL REVIEW OF UNDERGRADUATE, POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT, AND POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMMES FOR 2011-12

The Board noted that the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee considered the reports of the Faculties' scrutiny of the departmental annual review of undergraduate programmes and postgraduate taught programmes for 2011-12 at its meeting on 14 May 2013, and that the Research Degrees Programme Committee considered the reports of the Faculties' scrutiny of the departmental annual review of postgraduate research programmes for 2011-12, at its meeting on 28 May 2013. The Board received a summary of the good practice identified (AB/13/34). 13/089

21. FACULTY BOARDS

The Board received a combined report from the meetings of the Faculty Boards held in May 2013 (AB/13/35). 13/090

22. ACADEMIC BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Board received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board Executive Committee held on 13 May 2013 (AB/13/36). 13/091

23. ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Board received the minutes of the meetings of the Academic Planning Committee held on 7 March and 16 April 2013 (AB/13/37a,b). 13/092

24. DEPARTMENTAL GRANTS GROUP

The Board received the minutes of the meeting of the Departmental Grants Group held on 13 February 2013 (AB/13/38). 13/093

25. RESEARCH COMMITTEE

The Board received the minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee held on 27 February 2013 (AB/13/39). 13/094

26. LEARNING, TEACHING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

The Board received the minutes of the meetings of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee held on 30 January and 20 March 2013 (AB/13/40a,b). 13/095

27. STUDENTS' UNION

The Board noted the results of the March 2013 election for sabbatical officers (AB/13/41). 13/096

28. HONORARY TITLES AND ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS

The Board noted a paper on the award of honorary titles and noted the list of academic promotions for 2012-13 (AB/13/42a,b). 13/097

29. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The meetings of Academic Board for the 2013-14 academic year will take place on **Wednesday 20 November 2013 at 3pm in MX001, Wednesday 5 March 2014 at 3pm in MX001, and Wednesday 4 June 2014 at 3pm in MBLT**. The autumn term meeting is slightly earlier than in previous years so that it takes place before the November Council meeting. Council has to meet in November in order to sign off the financial accounts to meet the HEFCE deadline. 13/098

*Anna Sendall
Academic Registrar
7 June 2013*