

**ROYAL HOLLOWAY**  
University of London

**ACADEMIC BOARD**

**Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board, held on 30 May 2012**

Present:	Professor P Layzell (In the Chair) Dr S Ansari Dr B Baker Professor G Blair Ms K Blow Professor R Deem Dr F Fordham Professor A Gange Dr N Gascoigne Professor D Gilbert Dr A Gupta Ms S Honeycombe Professor A Kahane Professor R Kemp Professor P Leman Mr D Lemberger Cooper Professor K Normington	Professor B O'Keefe Mr P Phillips Professor J Powell Dr R Pym Professor R Schack Professor A Sheppard Ms S Simon Dr P Teixeira-Dias (for Professor M Fowler) Mr J Tuck Professor J Unerman Dr A Varty Professor V Vovk Dr D Waltham Professor J Wann Professor G Ward Dr N Widder Professor J Zanker
With:	Dr M Beck (Secretary)	
In attendance:	Mr K Aruwa Ms V Cannon Mr J Green Mr S Higman Professor J Morgan Mrs D Salisbury Ms E Wilkinson	SU Vice President (Education & Welfare) Elect Admissions Manager (for Ms L Gibbs) SU Vice President (Comms & Campaigns) Elect Registrar and College Secretary Incoming Head of Earth Sciences Academic Development Officer Head of College Careers Service
Apologies:	Professor C Bradley Professor M Fowler Mr D German Ms L Gibbs Professor P Hogg Professor J Johnson Ms S Waud	

**1. MEMBERSHIP**

- 1.1 The Board received the membership list (AB/12/24) and noted the apologies received by the Secretary in advance of the meeting. 12/053
- 1.2 The Board welcomed Professor Paul Hogg, the new Vice-Principal (Research and Enterprise), in his absence. 12/054
- 1.3 The incoming Head of Earth Sciences, Professor Jason Morgan, attending the meeting as an observer, was also welcomed. 12/055

- 1.4 The Board noted that this was the last meeting before the current terms of office expire for the following Representative members: 12/056  
 Professor Vladimir Vovk as Head of Department of Computer Science;  
 Dr Dave Waltham as Head of Department of Earth Sciences;  
 Professor Ruediger Schack as Head of Department of Mathematics.
- 1.5 The Board also noted that this was the last meeting for Professor Mary Fowler, Dean (Faculty of Science), who will be leaving the College. 12/057
- 1.6 The Board noted that Mr Daniel Lemberger Cooper, Miss Katie Blow and Miss Sarah Honeycombe, demit on 31 July 2012. The new Students' Union sabbatical officers, Mr Doug German (in absentia), Mr Kenny Aruwa and Mr Jamie Green, who will formally take their place on the Board in 2012/13 and had been invited to attend as observers, were welcomed. 12/058
- 2. MINUTES**
- The Minutes of the meeting held on **Wednesday, 7 March 2012** (M 12/001 - M 12/052), were confirmed as an accurate record. 12/059
- 3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**
- There were no matters arising from the Minutes. 12/060
- 4. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE CHAIR**
- 4.1 The Board noted that the Principal, on behalf of the Academic Board, approved the Draft Equality Code of Practice for submission to HEFCE (AB/12/25). The College will be informed shortly whether it has been approved. 12/061
- 4.2 The Board noted that the Principal, on behalf of the Academic Board, approved the proposal to confer the Honorary Title of Visiting Professor on Mr Andrew J Clark from the Information Security Group. 12/062
- 5. UNSTARRING OF ITEMS**
- There was no unstarring of items. 12/063
- 6. FORMAL REPORTS**
- 6.1 Principal's Report
- The Board received a written report from the Principal (AB/12/26). 12/064
- The Head of Department of Earth Sciences expressed concern that the College's bid for doctoral training centres would be adversely affected by the resignation of the Dean of Science. The Principal responded by saying he has asked Professor Hogg to take over as Acting Dean in the event of an interregnum and also to provide a means of continuity. 12/065
- The Principal noted that some concern had been raised in writing about a statement in the report regarding the £2.7million improvement target for professional services set by Council but this was a matter for Council itself. 12/066
- 6.2 Reports from the Deputy Principal and the Vice-Principals
- The Deputy Principal reported that work is underway to replace the existing DGG system and that any questions regarding this may be directed to him. He is currently working with the Director of Strategic Development on the next round of planning for the new academic year and would soon be meeting with Heads of Department to discuss this. 12/067
- The Vice-Principal (Students and Staff) reported that eleven departments had agreed to take part in the Peer Mentoring pilot scheme and a number of students had already 12/068

volunteered to act as peer mentors.

The Vice-Principal (Education) reported on QAA consultations on the new UK Quality Code, specifically that on the chapter on managing teaching and learning, which was launched on 30 May and also on the HEFCE consultation on a risk-based approach to quality assurance. The deadline for responding to both of these is 31 July. 12/069

Following recent discussion in England about A-Level reform, which would see A-level examinations set with oversight by Russell Group universities, the Department for Education visited the College on 17 May on the invitation of the Vice-Principal (Education). She noted that it was of paramount importance that not only Russell Group universities, but also the College and other 1994 group institutions be involved in providing similar oversight. One examination board has already begun discussions about the involvement of the College. 12/070

### 6.3 Report from the Council

The Board received the minutes from the Council meeting held on 21 November 2011 (AB/12/27). 12/071

## 7. UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACADEMIC STRATEGY

The Deputy Principal reported that the update on the development of the College's academic strategy had been summarised in paragraphs four and five of the Principal's Report (item 6.1, AB/12/26 above). 12/072

The Principal reported that the Director of Communications and External Relations had commissioned market research by *Higher Expectations* to examine student priorities when choosing a university. The initial findings of this research will be presented to the Senior Management Team in July and will inform the debate on an academic strategy. 12/073

## 8. ACADEMIC STRUCTURES WITHIN FACULTIES

8.1 The Board received an update from the Dean (Faculty of Arts and Social Science) on the Classics and History Working Group (AB/12/28). This Group had been established to explore the proposed merger of the departments of Classics and History into one school. The Group concluded that it was inappropriate at this time to merge the departments but had examined ways in which they could work together to generate mutual benefits, and would revisit a possible merger in two years' time. Ways in which Classics and History would collaborate include attending each other's Departmental Boards and Research Committees, sharing training provision, and the re-establishment of the Ancient and Medieval History degree. 12/074

8.2 The Board received a proposal from the Dean (Faculty of Management and Economics) on the future of the Centre for Criminology and Sociology, which was formed three years ago (AB/12/29). The proposal is to rename the Centre as the Centre for Criminology and Social Studies and for the School of Management to provide full administrative support. Work will continue to embed the Centre across the College with a new joint undergraduate degree with Psychology with effect from September 2013 and a new Masters degree with Management being explored. The large amount of work and effort put into formalising the status of the Centre was acknowledged. The Board approved the proposed change of name. 12/075

## 9. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

9.1 The Board welcomed the new Admissions Manager, Ms Cannon, and considered a report on UG and PG applications received to date for admission in 2012 (AB/12/30). The first UCAS deadline for undergraduate applicants to select their firm and insurance choices has already passed, and the second and final UCAS deadline is in early June. Undergraduate applications to the College are down by 6.2% compared with 2011 with the number of offers up by 1.8%. The number of students who have made the College their firm choice is 12/076

down by 2.4% and the number of insurance choices is up by 16%. The increased numbers of insurance choices raises the risk of taking more non-AAB+ students as well as increasing the uncertainty around confirmation. There are no concerns on the position of undergraduate overseas applicants.

Home/EU postgraduate taught applications are down by 16%, but the number of offers and acceptances are up. The conversion team is working with the School of Management to support conversion. The situation with postgraduate research applications is promising with the numbers of acceptances up. 12/077

The SU Vice-President (Education and Welfare) asked how the risk of over-recruitment will be managed. The Admissions Manager noted that there is scope to manage the numbers; departments are not obliged to accept applicants who have not met the exact entry requirements. The Head of the Department of Geography indicated that the statement in paper AB/12/30 about Geography over-recruiting was not correct as there was little danger that this would happen. 12/078

The Principal emphasised that confirmation and clearing would be critical this year to ensure that targets were met. Staff will work during the weekend when A-Level results are received to plan how targets are to be met during clearing. 12/079

9.2 The Admissions Manager reported that plans for Welcome Week and the review of Open Days are contained in the last two paragraphs of the report (item 9.1, AB/12/30 above). The SU Vice-President (Education and Welfare) endorsed the plans which she hoped would mean a more joined up approach with respect to providing support for students at the start of the academic year. 12/080

The Admissions Manager also noted that she and the Director of Academic Services and CIO are working to update the College's admissions policy. 12/081

The next College Open Day will be held on 13 June, and work has been undertaken to improve signage and departmental brochures. 12/082

The SU Vice-President (Education and Welfare), the Vice-Principal (Students and Staff) and the Residential Support Co-ordinator have formed a Welcome Week Working Group to create a more coordinated, cohesive and fun Welcome Week. Departments were urged to support this initiative. 12/083

## 10. COLLEGE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

The Board received a report on assessment at the College (AB/12/31). The Vice-Principal (Education) explained that the College, unlike many other HEIs, does not currently have an assessment strategy. The purpose of the paper was twofold: to get agreement on the broad principles underpinning the proposed Assessment Strategy and also to consider a number of options in relation to the shape of the academic year, in particular when formal examinations are held. The Board agreed to endorse the broad principles underpinning the draft Assessment Strategy. 12/084

The Vice-Principal (Education) explained that although departments use various modes of assessment, formal examinations dominate. With a single period of examinations in the summer term, there is a danger that if the examination period is disrupted for any reason, some departments would have few or no summative assessment marks for students. Additionally, most departments offer very little in the way of teaching in the summer term. The outcomes of previous discussions indicate that there is a need to consider ways in which either assessment and/ or its timing could be changed. The Board was asked to discuss the four options presented, each of which had advantages and disadvantages, and advise which should be investigated further. 12/085

The SU Vice-President (Communications and Campaigns) expressed the view that holding examinations in January rather than say, in December, could be damaging to students who would feel under pressure to stay on campus over the Christmas period. However, she 12/086

agreed that there was a need to balance the periods of stress. The SU Vice-President (Education and Welfare) suggested that giving other forms of assessment more weight throughout the year would alleviate the stress of the examination period. The School of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures had adopted different modes of assessment with some courses being assessed by coursework only, but this was not without its problems, such as an increase in the cases of plagiarism. The Vice-Principal (Education) pointed out that formal examinations created their own problems and cited the sharp increase in the occurrence of examination offences this year.

The Head of Psychology was concerned that Visiting Examiners would not easily be available mid-year to ratify winter examinations; however, it was pointed out that students currently know that the marks they are given for summatively assessed essays are not confirmed until June, so they should similarly expect that the confirmed results from any examinations sat during the winter would not be available until June. 12/087

There was some discussion on semesterisation which could increase flexibility in the curriculum. However, there were problems trying to fit a three term academic year into a two semester academic year. It was suggested that the College might therefore prefer to adopt a system of three terms of ten weeks each with more activities in the third term. The SU Vice-President (Education and Welfare) agreed that better use of the summer term should be made since students are paying fees for the summer term, which is seen as redundant by many students. The History Department currently uses the last two weeks of the summer term for start-up meetings, lectures in preparation for the following academic year, and workshops. 12/088

There was also a suggestion of extending the length of the summer term by two weeks, although concerns were raised about the impact that this might have on the already tight examination schedule. The Vice-Principal pointed out that she and the Deputy Head of Academic Development were continuing to explore ways in which more time could be given to departments for marking and processing of results while shortening the time required between confirmation of results and the graduation ceremonies. 12/089

The Vice-Principal (Education) thanked the Board for their comments. 12/090

## 11. REGULATIONS WORKING GROUP

11.1 The Board approved changes to the academic regulations for 2012-13 (AB/12/32). 12/091

11.2 The Vice-Principal (Education) presented a proposal for the introduction of a Postgraduate Credit Framework (AB/12/33), outlining briefly the reasons for this, e.g. facilitating continuing Professional Development, the necessity for exit awards, and opening up postgraduate study to a wider range of students, particularly part-time students. She pointed out, in response to concerns that had been raised previously, that exemptions from the Framework could be granted where there are special circumstances, such as professionally accredited programmes and that the range of institutions that had been consulted included, in the main, Russell Group and 1994 group institutions, which were listed in Appendix 1. The Regulations Working Group had considered the credit values of existing courses in the College (Appendix 2) and on that basis had originally suggested that the Framework be based on multiples of 10 credits. Following representations from some departments the proposal before the Board was to consider whether a framework based on multiples of 10 credits or 15 credits would be preferable. It was pointed out in discussions that some of the credit values stated in Appendix 2 did not appear to be correct, although the data was taken from Banner. The Deputy Head of Academic Development agreed to investigate further. 12/092

The Head of School of Management expressed concern about the statement in paragraph nineteen that students could take up to 30 credits in another department, which might put pressure on the host department, and suggested adding the wording, '*subject to capacity on the course and the student meeting the prerequisites.*' He also argued that departments should have the flexibility to choose the structure of their own degree programmes, such 12/093

as choosing multiples of 12 credits where multiples of 10 or 15 were not compatible with the programme structure. The Head of Mathematics was of the opinion that departments should have the freedom to choose credits to any value divisible by 180. He was also concerned that a framework would be too restrictive for the Information Security Group programme, which has part-time options and block study options, and also that the proposal to condone fewer credits than was currently the case would lead to more students failing. The Vice-Principal (Education) rejected the proposal for units of 12 credits and both she and the Deputy Head of Academic Development indicated that in many cases only minor readjustments would need to be made to courses with unusual credit values to align them with a 10 or 15 credit unit framework.

The Dean (Faculty of Management and Economics) suggested that rather than introduce a Postgraduate Credit Framework for 2013-14, it could be phased in, with the first step being to ensure that programmes offered exit awards of Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits) and Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits). Once the exit awards had been identified, this would facilitate defining the framework for a Masters degree. 12/094

The Principal suggested that the set of proposals be phased in over three years, that natural points at which changes could be phased in should be found, and that exit awards could be examined first, with a progressive move towards aligning programmes to the framework. New programmes would have to be validated to fit into the new structure. The Board agreed with these suggestions and endorsed the principles of the proposed Postgraduate Credit Framework. 12/095

## 12. PENALTIES FOR LATE SUBMISSION

12.1 The Board approved changes to the College policy on penalties for late submission of coursework (AB/12/34), subject to removal of the word 'maximum' from 'for work submitted more than 24 hours late, the *maximum* mark will be zero.' 12/096

12.2 The Board approved a College policy on submission of coursework by the deadline (AB/12/35). It was noted that in (d) of paragraph two, (ii) should be replaced by (b). 12/097

## 13. DIFFERENTIATION OF MASTERS BY RESEARCH AND MRes DEGREES

The Board received a report from the Vice-Principal (Education) setting out the difference between the Masters by Research degree, which draws on research degree regulations, and the MRes degree, which is structured more like a conventional taught masters degree, albeit with a focus on research methodology (AB/12/36), which were agreed by the Board. 12/098

## 14. CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH DEGREES VIVA

The Board considered a policy paper from the Vice-Principal (Education) on the conduct of MPhil/ PhD vivas (AB/12/37), which included three recommendations for deliberation, the first relating to the recording of vivas and/or the appointment of independent chairs. Some Board members suggested that all vivas should be audio-recorded while others suggested there might be problems obtaining the examiner's agreement, although it was unclear why they might object. The Board were of the opinion that the appointment of independent chairs was very resource intensive and that such chairs would need to be provided with appropriate training. It was agreed that the Research Degree Regulations should permit a choice of independent chair or audio recording, but with audio recording being the preferred method. 12/099

The second recommendation related to the appointment of internal examiners. In the past it was assumed that internal examiners, appointed from other University of London institutions, were familiar with the University of London regulations. However, many University of London institutions no longer award University of London degrees so staff there are unfamiliar with these regulations. Recommendation 2 therefore proposed to offer a choice to departments of appointing an internal examiner who was either a member of College staff or a member of a University of London institution which still awards 12/100

University of London degrees. However, Classics and Philosophy felt that it would be too restrictive if they only had access to institutions that still award University of London degrees. Other Board members also supported the ongoing use of internal examiners from all University of London institutions given the quality of vivas conducted. The Vice-Principal (Education) agreed that a compromise could be reached, with the recommendation revised to offer departments a choice of the internal examiner either being a member of College staff or a member of a University of London institution, regardless of whether or not it still awards University of London degrees.

Recommendation 3 considered permissible locations for the conduct of research degree vivas. The Board agreed that except in extenuating circumstances for which a waiver would be required, vivas must be conducted on College premises; at present this would mean either the Egham campus or at Bedford Square in central London. 12/101

#### **15. STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS**

The Board received a report from the Deputy Head of Academic Development on student academic appeals and complaints in relation to the 2010-11 academic session (AB/12/38). It was noted that although there had been little change in the number of PGT and PGR appeals, the number of UG appeals had increased from 45 in 2009-10 to 65 in 2010-11, with the appeals becoming increasingly more complex and taking more time to investigate. The number of appeals which have been upheld due to procedural irregularities had also increased. The Academic Development team had provided training to Senior Faculty Administrators earlier this year to address some of the issues identified in appeals to ensure that students are provided with the correct advice and guidance on procedural issues, in particular those relating to examinations. 12/102

#### **16. PERIODIC DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW**

The Board considered the Periodic Departmental Review report, together with the Action Plan following the Mathematics and Information Security Group Periodic Departmental Review held in November 2011 (AB/12/39a,b). There had been positive feedback from the students, and many examples of good practice identified. The Heads and staff of the Department of Mathematics and the Information Security Group were congratulated on the outcome of the review. 12/103

#### **17. INSTITUTIONAL EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY**

The Board received a strategic position paper from the Vice-Principal (Students and Staff) (AB/12/40), which will inform the Institutional Employment Strategy. Issues raised included graduates' lack of timeliness in applying for jobs, negative press coverage of the job market and graduates underselling themselves. On the positive side, alumni were increasingly willing to help graduates and the College, given its location, had access to a wide range of job opportunities which could provide placement opportunities for students. 12/104

The Vice-Principal (Students and Staff) also reported that the Royal Holloway Passport scheme will continue following the successful pilot this academic year. The Head of College Careers Service will contact departments shortly for activities to be included on the Passport next year. 12/105

#### **18. HONORARY DEGREES**

The Board received the recommendations for the conferral of Honorary Degrees in 2013 (AB/12/41). Next year the 20th Science Open Day will be held and it is proposed to celebrate its success by honouring leaders in the field of Science at next year's Science Festival. The Board supported the recommendations prior to final approval by Council at its meeting on 20 June 2012. 12/106

#### **STARRED ITEMS**

## **19. ANNUAL REVIEW OF UNDERGRADUATE, POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT, AND POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMMES FOR 2010-11**

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 for 2010-11 at its meeting on 21 March 2012, and of postgraduate taught programmes for 2010-11 at its meeting on 15 May 2012, and that the Research Degrees Programme Committee will consider the reports of the Faculties' scrutiny of the departmental annual review of postgraduate research programmes for 2010-11, at its meeting on 31 May 2012. The Board received a summary of the good practice identified (AB/12/42). 12/107

## **20. FACULTY BOARDS**

The Board received a combined report from the meetings of the Faculty Boards held in February and May 2012 (AB/12/43). 12/108

## **21. PROPOSED CHANGES TO CONSTITUTIONS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

21.1 The Board approved the proposed changes to the constitutions for the three Faculty Boards (AB/12/44). 12/109

21.2 The Board approved the revised Staff-Student Committee constitution (AB/12/45). 12/110

21.3 The Board approved the revised Research Committee Terms of Reference (AB/12/46). 12/111

## **22. ACADEMIC BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The Board received the unconfirmed minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board Executive Committee held on 14 May 2012 (AB/12/47). 12/112

## **23. ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Board received the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Planning Committee held on 5 March 2012 (AB/12/48). 12/113

## **24. DEPARTMENTAL GRANTS GROUP**

The Board received the minutes of the meeting of the Departmental Grants Group held on 9 March 2012 (AB/12/49). 12/114

## **25. RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

The Board received the minutes of the meetings of the Research Committee held on 25 January and 28 March 2012 (AB/12/50a,b). 12/115

## **26. LEARNING, TEACHING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE**

The Board received the report from the meetings of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee held on 21 March and 15 May 2012 (AB/12/51). 12/116

## **27. HONORARY TITLES**

27.1 The Board approved the proposal to confer the Honorary Title of Honorary Research Fellow on Dr Alison Hodge, from the Department of Drama and Theatre (AB/12/52). 12/117

27.2 The Board approved the proposal to confer the Honorary Title of Visiting Professor on Professor Ali Ismail Al-Juboury, from the Department of Earth Sciences (AB/12/53). 12/118

27.3 The Board noted a paper on the conferral of honorary titles and the award of titles to Royal Holloway staff (AB/12/54). 12/119



## 28. PUBLICATION

- 28.1 The Board noted that new regulatory and policy changes would require broad dissemination around the College. 12/120
- 28.2 The Board confirmed that the following paper was exempt from Freedom of Information Act requirements: AB/12/41. 12/121

## 29. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The meetings of Academic Board for the 2012-13 academic year will take place on **Wednesday 28 November 2012 at 3pm in MX001, Wednesday 6 March 2013 at 3pm in MX001, and Wednesday 29 May 2013 at 3pm in MX001.** 12/122

*Dr Marina Beck*  
*Deputy Head of Academic Development Services*  
*12 June 2012*