

**Minutes of the twenty sixth meeting of the Board of Governors  
held on 19 March 2008**

**Present:** Peter Anwyl

Graham Castle	Abdul Rahim
John Gabriel	Brian Roper
Jeremy Mayhew	Finlay Scott
Bob Morgan	Michael Snyder
Raj Patel	

**Clerk to the Board:** John McParland

<b>In attendance:</b>	Bob Aylett	Pam Nelson
	Lyn Link	Rachel Thomas
	Paul Lister	

**Observers:** Betty Kagan

**Apologies:** John Alsbury, John Haworth, Stephen John, Prof Zenobia Nadirshaw, Abu Shohid and Sarah Tyacke

**348. Chairs Announcements**

The Board welcomed Betty Kagan, Director of Information Systems and Services, attending the meeting as an observer.

It was noted that the President of the Student Union had been unable to attend the meeting because of arrangements for his forthcoming

marriage. The Board passed on its congratulations to the President.

**349. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2008**

(Agenda item BG 26/1)

The Minutes of the meeting on 13 December 2006 were confirmed as a correct record.

**350. Matters Arising**

The Board received an oral update on HEFCE holdback from the Vice-Chancellor. It was noted that the University's accounts were unable to be finalised until the holdback figure had been agreed. Further data analysis had not yet been completed and a further meeting with HEFCE was planned for 17 April. It was also noted that Governors would be informed of the outcome and that a special meeting would be required before the end of May to finalise the accounts.

**(Action: Vice-Chancellor/Director of Finance/Clerk to the Board)**

**351. Report for the period 3.12.07 – 7.3.08 from the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive**

(Agenda item BG 26/3.1)

The Board received the report by the Vice-Chancellor.

The following points were noted:

**National Student Survey**

It was noted that students were being encouraged to complete the survey forms as a response rate below 50% would not allow the results to be published.

**Awards Ceremonies**

It was noted that the arrangements for the December awards ceremonies had worked well. The involvement of Governors in presiding was appreciated and the new arrangements would set the pattern for future ceremonies.

**Croydon College**

It was noted that work on the joint venture with Croydon College for Higher Education provision continues and a process for discussions had been agreed. The Board would be kept informed of progress.

**(Action: Vice-Chancellor/Clerk to the Board)**

**352. Strategic Plan**

(Agenda item BG 26/3.2)

The Board received the progress report on the Strategic Plan, the report on Learning Teaching and Assessment over the next 10 years and a paper on Academic effectiveness, efficiency and the disposition of academic resource.

**Learning and Teaching**

Governors noted the changes to teaching methods envisaged over the next ten years.

The Board also received a tabled replacement for page 25 of the agenda which covered all **three** styles of future learning envisaged, transmissive, constructivist and situative.

**Academic effectiveness**

It was noted that a move towards further consolidations and larger departments as shown by the successful development of the London Metropolitan Business School, would optimise resource management and attain maximal Academic synergies and outputs. The Academic Board Governors were supportive of this approach, which would provide a more coherent structure, enable liaison across other departments and disciplines and provide an opportunity to rethink parts of the University's academic profile.

**353. SWOT Analysis**

(Agenda item BG 26/3.3)

The Board received and noted the SWOT analysis undertaken for European Universities Association (EUA) accreditation.

The following points were noted:

**Staff**

The Board expressed their concerns that the issues identified by the SWOT analysis, although diminishing, were a major issue for the University. The physical dispersal of departments, Union relations and entrenched views were very unhelpful and were preventing the University from attaining its goals. It was suggested that a different

approach was required to treating this as simply a communication problem which could be disguising the more substantive underlying issues entrenched within the University.

It was noted that the appointment of the new Director of Marketing, Communications and Fundraising would help to address the public image and profile issues facing the University.

It was also noted that a new approach was planned to address staff performance and management strategy for the University. Different academic profiles were required to respond to the demands of a move towards a more research based University.

### **354. Management Information** (Agenda item BG 26/4.1))

The Board received and noted the report from the Director of Finance on Management Information for the half year and the forecast for the year to 31 July 2007.

The following points were noted:

- That in the headlines section of the front page of the report the University's performance was £200k better than budget not £20k and the Boilerhouse refurbishment project was set out in Appendix B not A.
- That it was important to take note of the significant risks. These included HEFCE holdback, not meeting tuition fee income targets and debtors.
- **Bursary payments**  
That on the basis of the payment of bursaries made to date total payments for the year would be approximately £1.9m less than budgeted. It was also noted that this could partly have resulted from problems incurred with the processing of Student Loans. A campaign was underway to encourage eligible students to apply for the bursary. Governors were also of the opinion that there was a role for the Student Union and attention could be drawn to the availability of bursaries through the SU magazine.

**(Action: President of the SU)**

- **Debtors**

That this year debtors as a percentage of the amount invoiced (40.3%) was slightly less than at the same time last year (41.1%).

That from the finance tables presented it was difficult to pull out the salient information necessary to understand the figures. The figures appeared to indicate that self-financing debt had virtually doubled from £7m to £14m and that Local Authority/ Privately sponsored debt had increased from £1.1m to £1.7m.

It was explained that the age analysis table showed debt by year of charge, ie £33.6m cash had been collected to date for fees which had been invoiced for 2007/08. The total cash collected was shown in the total at the end of the column - £39,271. It was also pointed out that the January 2008 “self financing” debt included fees for students who had not yet provided confirmation of funding via the Student Loan Company. This categorisation was a change from 2007, when these debtors were included within the SLC category. This explained the apparent rise in self-financing debtors.

It was agreed that management would look again at the format of the appendices on debtors to try to improve them.

**(Action: Director of Finance)**

- **Debt Collection**

That initiatives to collect debts should be put in place immediately. The additional resources incurred would help to reduce outstanding debt.

It was noted that further expenditure could not be justified as all old debts were with collection agencies and action had been taken to deal with current year student debtors.

It was suggested that investment in a pre-enrolment course about the financial implications of undertaking a degree may be beneficial to students so financial arrangements could be put in place prior to the commencement of their courses.

- **Forecast and Budget**

That the expected outturn was the same as the budget ie as for tuition fees and education contracts (Table Appendix 1.1). There

was no reason to anticipate any significant changes to the forecast. It was noted that in future any definite changes would be included when they occurred

- **Business College of Athens**  
That the taxation certificate had now been received and the outstanding debt of £396,000 was due to be paid to the University tomorrow.
- **HEFCE Project Capital**  
That spending of the outstanding HEFCE project capital funds should be completed on time.

#### **Boiler House Refurbishment Project`**

The Board agreed that expenditure could commence on the Boiler House refurbishment project prior to formal HEFCE approval of grant funding.

- **Student Numbers**  
That Governors found it difficult to interpret the table and to understand if the University would meet the end of year forecast. It was noted that the table format would be reviewed and the figures would be provided on a phased, month by month, basis in future.

It was noted that the University was closer to reaching recruitment targets. Currently international student enrolment appeared to be doing well while home student undergraduate targets remained a problem and there was a need for the University to extend its recruitment drive outside London. The outlook for long term international and European student recruitment was not encouraging and a cause for concern given increased competition. This was an area “high” on the risk register monitored by the Audit Committee.

**(Action: Director of Finance)**

### **355. Budget Principles** (Agenda item BG 26/4.2)

The Board received and noted the report on Budget Principles.

The Board approved the principles (overall principles set out below),

which would be circulated to budget holders as part of the budget instruction pack.

*Overall principles*

- The budget will be set with the aim of achieving the University's financial targets, without compromising its strategic objectives and with adequate return on income.
- There will be continued support for new initiatives through the development fund.
- The introduction of full economic costing and the roll out of the university's costing and pricing policy, to include the notional charging of estate costs to activities.
- Maintenance of the estate strategy and the generation of sufficient cash to finance the capital programme and associated revenue implications.
- Good cash management and debtors control to improve cash flow.
- Continued investment in staff development.
- Support for the University's information strategy.
- Measures to improve student recruitment, retention and progression.
- Restructuring of departments to improve efficiency and cut costs.
- Continued drive to generate external income and improved net contribution.
- A fair and transparent process.
- It should be informed by bottom-up data on staff commitments, based on accurate staffing estimates.
- It should recognise non-controllable costs, i.e. those determined by contracts with external bodies (e.g. essential subscriptions) or by history (e.g. depreciation).
- Adequate provision should be made for contingency.

**356. Performance Management**  
(Agenda item BG 26/5.1)

The Board received the report on Performance Management and noted that for the reasons set out in the report it was now necessary for the University to develop and operate its performance management tools within a more structured framework and with increased emphasis on achieving University goals together with greater individual accountability for performance.

The following comments were noted:

- That staff should be made aware that the policy was being put in

place to find better ways of meeting the needs of the University's students and the communities served by the University.

- That the right approach was required and it was suggested that a series of workshops may be helpful to encourage staff to contribute to solutions to deal with some of the performance issues.
- That it should be made clear that the University's performance was a shared problem for the whole institution with consequences for the whole institution
- That flexibility of approach was an important element of the policy.
- That there was an element of uncertainty about the success of performance related pay in a University environment, and an open approach was recommended.
- That it would be important to keep the process as straightforward as possible and related to major career objectives. The performance management processes should not be disproportionate to the business performance.
- That the group to drive this initiative forward would be Heads of Departments together with Associate Heads and senior staff within departments.
- That monitoring and evaluation would need to be improved to provide a shared view of where the University was underperforming and equally where it was doing well.

The Board endorsed making performance management the key component in the Human Resources strand of the forthcoming new 10 year Strategic Plan as proposed in the report. The Board stressed the need to engage positively with staff to deliver the agenda working "with the grain" and the goodwill that existed.

A prioritisation of the various methods to deliver the performance agenda would be necessary and should be informed by this principle of working with those individuals and groups who were most receptive.

Notwithstanding this approach the Board recognised that some

opposition to the changes required could be expected.

**(Action: Vice-Chancellor/Director of Human Resources)**

**357. Student Union Constitution**

(Agenda item BG 26/6.1)

The Board received the report on the Student Union Constitution.

It was noted that the Governance Committee had considered the SU Constitution and recommended the Board to approve it.

It was also noted that the Constitution would become fully effective on 1 August 2008 for the forthcoming year.

The Board approved the Constitution but in order to enable the necessary elections to take place agreed that the provisions in respect of elections to the Council and of sabbatical and non-sabbatical officers be effective immediately.

The Board congratulated all those who had contributed to the production of the new SU Constitution.

**(Action: Clerk to the Board)**

**358. Collections Development Policy**

(Agenda item BG 26/6.2)

The Board noted the report and approved the Collections Development Policy.

**359. Academic Board**

(Agenda item BG 26/7)

The Board received and noted the report from the Academic Board.

**Membership**

It was noted that the Board now had an almost full complement with five members newly elected from the Staff Representative Council.

**360. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would be held on Wednesday 25 June, in the 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom, Technology

Tower, Holloway Road (North Campus) at **5pm.**

**A special meeting would also need to be convened in May on a date to be determined.**

## **AGENDA PART TWO**

### **361. The Board noted for information**

(Agenda items BG 26/8.1 - BG 26/8.3)

- a) Dates of Future Meetings
- b) Current Membership
- c) Outline Agenda for next meeting

### **362. The Board also noted for information**

(Agenda items BG 26/9.1 – BG 26/9.2)

- a) Preventing Extremism in Universities

The Board noted that the trial of those who were alleged to have been involved in a plot in August 2006 would begin during the week commencing 31 March 2008. One of the University's former students was among the accused and it was noted that any press enquires concerning this matter should be referred to the University.

- b) ELQs

### **363. The Board noted the unconfirmed Minutes of:**

(Agenda items BG 26/9.1 – 20/9.7)

- a) Minutes of the Joint Standards Board – 22 January 2008
- b) Minutes of the Finance and Human Resources Committee – 6 February 2008
- c) Minutes of London Metropolitan Enterprises Ltd – 27 February 2008

- d) Minutes of the Health and Safety Council – 27 February 2008
- e) Minutes of the Audit Committee – 5 March 2008
- f) Minutes of the Women’s Library Council – 6 March 2008
- g) Minutes of the Governance Committee – 12 March 2008