

RuskinCollege Oxford

GOVERNING EXECUTIVE

Minutes of Part A of the five hundred and seventy-fifth meeting of the Governing Executive held on Friday 6th March at 11.00am at Ruskin College, Dunstan Road, Old Headington, Oxford, OX3 9BZ

Present:

Cllr Van Coulter (ordinary member) VC
John Fray (ordinary member) JF
Paul Inman (ordinary member) PI
Doug Nicholls (ordinary member) DN
Carole Orgell-Rosen (Chair) (ordinary member) CH
Pearl Ryall (ordinary member) PR
Alan Shepherd (Vice-Chair) (ordinary member) V-C
Marva Small (ordinary member) MS
Dr Peter Dwyer (staff member) PD
Guy Langton (staff member) GL
Dr Bridget Ng'andu (staff member) BN
Dr Chris Wilkes (Principal) P
Kieron Winters (staff member) KW
Rowan Padmore (student member) RP

In attendance:

Professor Harriet Bradley (Academic Adviser) HB
Professor Miriam David (Academic Adviser) MD
Sally Courtney (Finance Director) FD
Paul Di Felice (Vice-Principal) V-P
Helen Jeffries (Clerk)CI

PART A

- 1 Apologies for absence** Action
Apologies were received from Wendy Dawson, Rob Hancock, Anne Hock and Jo Morris.
- 2 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest.

The Clerk took the Chair for the next two items.
- 3 Election of Chair**
Carole Orgell-Rosen was nominated and seconded. There were no further nominations.
Approved: the election of Carole Orgell-Rosen as Chair of the Governing Executive and Council
- 4 Election of Vice-Chair**
Alan Shepherd was nominated and seconded. There were no further nominations.
Approved: the election of Alan Shepherd as Vice-Chair of the Governing Executive and Council.

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5. Welcome and approve new members (when appropriate)

The Chair welcomed the members of the Governing Executive to the 575th meeting.

6. Minutes

Received: the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2015.

Confirmed: as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2015.

7. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

The Chair reported that she had attended a Ministerial Recognition reception at the Foreign Office on 4th March.

Noted (7.1): that the Chair had received a document from the Department of Business, Innovations and Skills that appeared to blur the lines between the role of governor and the role of manager, and seemed to support the idea of governors taking part in quality assurance in classrooms. The document reference for governors was <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-colleges-governance-reform-assessment>

Noted (7.2): that the Governing Executive needed to be clear about the boundaries between it and management of the College, and how this would be evidenced at an Ofsted inspection.

Noted (7.3): that the Vice-Chair had participated in an Association of Colleges (AOC) webinar that had put governor conversations with students as important but not compulsory.

Management Team Reports and Special Items

8. Principal's report

Received: a report from the Principal on current issues.

Noted (8.1): that the Management Team reports had been restructured. The Principal would report on finance and external engagement. The Vice-Principal would report on teaching and learning, quality and equality.

Noted (8.2): that recent meetings with the College's bank had been positive, and that the bank had used the report from BDO to give assurances to its credit committee. The bank would use the Recovery Plan to monitor financial progress and would ask for regular updates. The bank would offer short-term assurance through the provision of an overdraft facility.

Noted (8.3): the revised Recovery Plan had been sent to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). A monitoring meeting was planned for 20th March.

Noted (8.4): that external engagement was an increasingly high priority.

Noted (8.5): that the College would be working closely with Abingdon and Witney College, which was among the top 10% of colleges in the country. It would hold the county community learning budget in 2015/16, and its Principal was keen for Ruskin to take on work using this budget.

Noted (8.6): that the College continued to work with the Oxford Brookes Associate College Partnership and was now part of a new Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) Collaborative Outreach Network. This would help to spread the word about Higher Education in the area covered by the Network, and provide some

collaborative participation on routes into Higher Education.

Noted (8.7): that the Specialist Designated Institutions (SDIs) continued to lobby the SFA on future funding. The College had received a letter indicating that the unprotected skills funding budget was likely to be cut by as much as 24%. The SDIs continued to put forward the case that they were special and different to other institutions.

Vice-Principal's report

9. **Received:** a report from the Vice-Principal on teaching, learning and assessment.

Noted (9.1): that the Vice-Principal commented that the report was positive and he acknowledged the support of College staff in achieving this. The report addressed key areas of which the Governing Executive needed to be aware, including resource issues.

Noted (9.2): that under the heading of learning, teaching and assessment, the College had enhanced the staff development programme, including developing capacity in the classroom. Specialist training had taken place on dyslexia awareness and the College had invested in an e-platform that provided resources for teachers. The assessment process had been refreshed and 81% of observations were graded Good or Better. A new Staff Review and Development scheme had been developed and had been taken through the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC).

Noted (9.3): under the heading of Quality Enhancement, the College would be receiving a review visit next year from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Quality Officer would be leading staff development towards this. The College received a Green status from Aim Awards, which meant that there were no actions to address. The MA in International Labour and Trade Union Studies (ILTUS) was being revised and going through the process of re-validation, and would now be known as the MA in Global Labour and Social Change, giving it a broader reach.

Noted (9.4): The overall College success rate for 2013/14 was 96%. The College achieved outstanding outcomes in Maths, English and the Trade Union Programme. The long course success rate for Cert HE was 67%. This was below minimum standards and was affected by retention rates.

Noted (9.5): that the College had validated a new diploma in Access to the Health Professions and that would comprise 60% science work. The College would engage a science tutor and deliver the science element of the course at Cheney School. The College would be delivering a week of taster events at Blackbird Leys in April and the blended learning initiative had been extended to include trade union courses.

Noted (9.6): that the Student Voice strategy was in place and a dialogue was in place with various groups of students. A Student Conference was planned for June.

Noted (9.7): that following the training on dealing with dyslexia, less complaints were received from students, though some complaints had been received regarding the manner in which the College tracked this protected characteristic. A College-wide discussion on behaviours and working together was undertaken with staff in the autumn of last year. The aim was to find agreement on core values and behaviours. This was due to conclude in March.

Questions followed during which the following points were made;

- The reference to staff behaviours concerned no official complaints. However if there were any official complaints they and any outcomes would be reported to AQSC.
- Ruskin College's traditional mission was to give a second chance of

education. Stark gender inequalities had arisen from the £9k tuition fee.

Agreed: that the V-P would provide a paper on this to inform the Governing Executive.

- A properly run appraisal scheme would offer improvements for both sides and was an Ofsted required action.
- The connection with Empire State University had been made through the ILTUS team and would look at shared practice through Skype etc.

10. Finance Director's report

Received: a report on the financial position to the end of December 2014.

Noted (10.1): that tuition fees were projected to be under budget by 14%, due to student drop-outs and non-attendance. This should be absorbed by the budget, being offset by savings on the salaries budget. The budget was expected to balance.

Noted (10.2): that none of the non-payroll budgeted areas were expected to be overspent at the half-year point.

Noted (10.3): that the College was forecasting a 1:5 ratio on the Bank Covenant (under the current method of calculation) at the year end. This was being calculated using the financial statement auditors' interpretation of the Covenant.

11. Recovery Plan

Received: the amended Recovery Plan following SFA feedback.

Noted (11.1): that some changes had been made to the Plan that appeared before the Governing Executive in January. These mostly concerned the contingency plan.

Noted (11.2): that the SFA did not formally approve the Plan, but commented upon it and monitored it until the February after the academic year in which the College's financial health was awarded the Satisfactory grade.

Questions followed during which the following points were made;

- The College expected to make £150k in external income from conferences and residential bookings in 2014/15 and would be appointing a Development Officer. All the beds were taken in July by language schools.
- It would be useful to make use of a consultant when appointing the Development Officer.
- The first Management/Governor update meeting had been held. Terms of Reference had been agreed, as had the membership of the group. The group would act as a critical friend and meet between Governing Executive meetings. It would report to the Governing Executive at each meeting.

12. Key Performance Indicators

Received: the draft key performance indicators.

Noted (12.1): that the indicators would be brought to each meeting of the Governing Executive and would allow the Executive to more easily judge outcomes. They would use both historical data and targets. The KPI's would enable measurement of progress towards each strategic aim in the new Strategic Plan.

Noted (12.2): Indicators 1-3 covered enrolment numbers and how they were translated into income. Indicator 4 measured success, progression and student satisfaction in FE and HE. Indicators 5 and 6 covered innovation and equality and diversity. The staff indicator (7) looked at observation and resourcing (in teaching hours utilisation). Indicator 8 covered finance and included the financial health grade that was very important when dealing with the SFA. Indicator 9 covered external

income including residential income and premises expenditure as a percentage of turnover. Indicator 10 looked at governance and mainly comprised inputs. Some work was needed to find out how other Colleges measure output.

Noted (12.3): that the Chair would ask members of the National Governance Council about this.

Noted (12.4): that one way of measuring governor output would be improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.

Noted (12.5): that it would be useful to include HR effectiveness in the Indicators. An HR consultant had been appointed on a fixed term contract to the end of July to help with the voluntary severance programme and the introduction of the Staff Review and Development programme. This would be reported on under the Recovery Plan.

Noted (12.6) that attendance and quoracy at Governing Executive and attendant committees were monitored by the Search Committee annually.

Noted (12.7): that a decision needed to be made on which of the indicators to monitor most closely.

Noted (12.8): it would be useful to monitor any variation in outcome for diverse groups under equality and diversity.

Noted (12.9): that Indicator 7 should refer to Full Time Equivalents rather than head count.

Noted (12.10): that the AQSC did not currently include determination of a quorate in its Terms of Reference and some work would be needed on how the committee was formed.

Policies

13. Financial Regulations

Noted: that the Financial Regulations were approved by the Finance Committee at the meeting of February 6th, but required a further amendment and would return to the Finance Committee and then the Governing Executive in May.

14. Freedom of Information-Publication Scheme

Received: the updated Publication Scheme.

Approved: the Publication Scheme.

15. Higher Education Tuition Fee Policy

Received: the Higher Education Tuition Fee Policy.

Noted (15.1): that a strong tuition fee policy was crucial and that it would help in discussions with students and with defaulters. It was linked to Student Finance England (SFE) instalment policies.

Approved: the Higher Education Tuition Fee Policy.

16. Risk Management Policy

Noted: that the Risk Management Policy was linked to the Strategic Plan and was referred to the Audit Committee of 13th March. It would return to the Governing Executive in May.

Items for Approval

Finance and Risk

17. Tuition Fees and Charges

Received: the tuition fees and charges for 2015/16 and the HE tuition fees for 2016/17.

Noted (17.1): that the College would be introducing tuition fees of £9k for students starting in 2015/16, and a 2% increase in existing fees. There would be a 3% increase in residential costs. The latter two increases had been benchmarked across the sector.

Noted (17.2): that students had received e-mails with the information so that they could make their applications to SFE at the correct rate.

Approved: the tuition fees and charges for 2015/16 and the HE tuition fees for 2016/17.

Governance

18. Search Committee

Received: a verbal report on the Search Committee held on Friday 6th March 2015

Noted (18.1): that the Search Committee recommended the nominations to Council of Kate Quigley from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers and Sue Corrigan from Oxford County Council.

Noted (18.2): that the Search Committee had approved the use of SGOSS and the ICAEW volunteering database in finding potential new members of Council and Governing Executive.

Noted (18.3): that the Search Committee had reviewed a draft role description for governors and had asked for amendments to be made. The draft would return to Search Committee for further discussion.

Approved: the Search Committee nominations to Council.

Committee and Governance Items to Receive

Committee Minutes

19. **Received:** the minutes of the Finance Committee held on February 6th 2015.

In the absence of the Chair of the Finance Committee, MS drew the Executive's attention to the following points;

- The Committee has twice raised an initiative to fund raise for £500k for the College. A fund raising letter had been created, but little support had arisen from any other group.
- The Vice-Principal would report to the Finance Committee on arranging courses for ethnic minority and immigrant groups.
- The Committee had received a report from Teresa Munby (Academic Co-ordinator for Social, Youth and Community Work Studies and Tutor in Law and Social Work) on current issues and future strategy. Arising from this was a concern that ethnic minority students were receiving a disproportionate amount of entry level offers of employment.

20. **Received:** the minutes of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) held on 26 September 2014.

Noted (20.1): that the meeting had covered issues with the personal development scheme, a projected teaching hours document and the Disclosure and Barring

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Service (DBS) procedure for Youth and Community Work students.

21. **Received:** the minutes of the AQSC held on 12th December 2014.
Noted (21.1): that the meeting had included discussions around the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), the Quality Improvement Plan and the Recovery Plan.
The following points were raised;
- Student attendance was very important in improving retention. The V-P confirmed that attendance was reviewed on a daily basis and that staff met with students as soon as possible.
 - DN was pleased to see that a discussion continued about fieldwork supervisors for Youth and Community Work students.

Governance Items

22. **Received:** the final audit findings report as updated by Baker Tilly UK Audit LLP.
23. **Received:** feedback from the annual Governing Executive self-assessment exercise.
24. **Received:** a verbal report on a webinar on Scrutiny of Teaching and Learning for Governors, attended by Alan Shepherd and Marva Small.
Noted (24.1): the old model of governance viewed teaching, learning and assessment as operational matters not strategic. Under the new model teaching, learning and assessment were recognised as the core business of a college and therefore crucial strategically.
Noted (24.2): that from its next meeting there would be three governors attending AQSC.
Noted (24.3): that governors have a clear duty to scrutinise but must be mindful of the boundaries, e.g. governors should look at the system or strategy underpinning lesson observance.
Noted (24.5): that the webinar emphasised that students should be put at the heart of everything and that the college should revolve around the student experience.

Standing Items

25. **Meeting dates**
Noted: meeting dates for the remainder of the academic year;
- 15 May 2015
 - 3 July 2015

There being no further business Part A of the meeting closed at 1.00p.m

Signed by the Chair of the meeting succeeding that to which these minutes pertain
