

Ruskin College

GOVERNING EXECUTIVE

Minutes of the five hundred and fifty-ninth meeting of the Governing Executive held on Friday 11 March 2011 at 11.00am at Ruskin College, Walton Street, Oxford (Elvin Room)

Present:	Chris Baugh Mike Bradley John Fray Liz Mathews Audrey Mullender Teresa Munby (part) David Norman (Chair) Carole Orgell-Rosen Pearl Ryall Kieron Winters	In attendance:	Sally Courtney Rebecca Cox (minutes) Hilda Kean Chris Wilkes
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PART A

- 1 Apologies for absence** Action
 Apologies were received from Jo Morris, Jane Dixon, Pam Johnson, Des McDermott, Anne Hock and Ruth Hunt.
- 2 Absent**
 Jan Etienne, Doug Nicholls and Pamela Roberts were absent without apologies.
- 3 Declaration of interests**
Noted: that no member present declared any interest, financial or otherwise, relating to any item on the agenda.
- 4 Election of Chair**
Noted: that David Norman was nominated as Chair of Governing Executive for a further year. This nomination was seconded and no further nominations were received.
Approved: the re-election of David Norman as Chair of Governing Executive.
- 5 Election of Vice Chair**
Noted: that Carole Orgell-Rosen was nominated as Vice Chair of Governing Executive for a further year. This nomination was seconded and no further nominations were received.
Approved: the re-election of Carole Orgell-Rosen as Vice Chair of Governing Executive.
- 6 Minutes**
Confirmed: as a correct record the minutes of Part A of the Governing Executive meeting held on 26 November 2010.
- 7 Matters arising** Clerk
Noted: that the Clerk would bring nameplates to the next meeting.
Noted: that there were no further matters arising.

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8 Finance Committee

8.1 **Received:** the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 4 February 2011.

(Teresa Munby joined the meeting at 11.08pm.)

8.2 **Received:** a report on the financial position to the end of December 2010.

Noted: the Finance Director summarised the report, in particular:

- that tuition fee income currently remained in line with that indicated in the report, that is a good percentage over budget. The prudent approach to forecasting had paid off and a more balanced position was anticipated for the year end
- that a 0.4% pay increase had now been paid. The budgeted amount had been 1% and the 0.6% retained in the budget would help the year-end position
- that the cashflow had now been updated to reflect the HEFCE clawback and reduction in funding that would be effective from April.

8.3 **Received:** a report on the funding situation and tuition fees.

Received: by email a report from the Office for Fair Access on 'How to produce an access agreement for 2012-13'.

Received: a tabled report on the Management Team's recommendation regarding tuition fees.

Noted: the Principal summarised the background to the changes that were being made to the funding of tuition fees and what the proposed new system would mean for Ruskin. From 2012-13, if colleges planned to charge £6K per student or less, they were allowed to do so without needing to justify their decision. For those who wished to charge between £6K and the maximum permissible fee of £9K, an access agreement had to be drawn up and submitted to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) by 19 April 2011, including a clear statement of the fee to be charged. From tuition fee income, Colleges would be asked to fund access measures aimed at widening participation or measures focused on retention. As Ruskin already has disproportionate numbers of mature students, those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and those with disabilities, it will be possible that it should only spend 10% of income from fees above £6000 on these measures. The College will be required to sign up to the National Scholarship Programme, with the match funding yet to be clarified. Students in the future will be offered a loan to cover the cost of their tuition fees, which will be repayable once they are earning in excess of £21K per year. The Governing Executive needed to consider where Ruskin sat in the marketplace and how much debt people might be prepared to take on in order to study here. Initially it had been hoped that the College would be able to charge £6K, but currently the cost of educating a student at Ruskin is £8036. The tabled report demonstrated that there were other uncertain factors to take into consideration when setting the tuition fee, including whether the College would be so successful in recruiting students once tuition fees were introduced, whether the level of student debt would increase and whether there would be an increase in students dropping out as a result of mounting debts. In order to cushion the College against these risks, and to cover the costs of the access agreement, it was suggested that a figure of £8.5K per student should be charged.

The Chair opened the discussion for questions during which the following points were clarified:

- that part time undergraduates would pay a proportion of the tuition fee, to a maximum of 75% depending on the course. They would have full access to the student loans for the first time

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- that the access agreement would be reviewed annually and the decision to be taken today would be for entry in 2012. There would be an opportunity to alter the level of tuition fee for 2013
- the Finance Director talked through the tabled paper, explaining that it referred only to long course students and outlining how the tutor, clerical, central services, premises and student support costs had been apportioned in the calculations. The student numbers used were based on this year and allowed for the possibility of people withdrawing from courses
- that it would not be practical to set different fees for different courses due to the size of Ruskin and the fact that it did not offer any STEM subjects
- that the Government would continue to control student numbers in order to manage their spending on student loans
- that it had not been made clear whether student grant finance for tuition fees would be available in the future, but it was anticipated that these would disappear.

The Chair then invited comments during which the following points were raised:

- it was suggested that the trade unions could be approached to determine whether they could offer any support, and the Principal was asked to take this up and explain the threat that Ruskin faced
- concern was expressed that the figure of £8.5K was considered too high by staff members and would not set Ruskin apart from other institutions.

AM

The Chair stated that all Governing Executive members would be worried that the tuition fee level that they were being forced to set in order to break even by a very difficult political climate might prevent students from choosing to study at Ruskin, but that if the fee were set any lower the College would be in immediate deficit.

The recommendation that the annual tuition fee for 2012-13 be set at £8.5k per student was put to the vote and was carried.

Carried

It was requested that the vote be separated into two parts as follows:

- that Ruskin should commit to charging more than £6K per student and submit an access agreement for consideration by OFFA.
- that the annual tuition fee for 2012-13 be set at £8.5Kper student.

Carried

Carried

Agreed: that this had been a very difficult decision and one which the Governing Executive would not have endorsed out of choice. All agreed that it would be vital to sell the College harder than ever before and to prove the distinct worth of Ruskin to anyone considering coming here, as they would be taking on a financial risk in order to do so.

8.4 Received: a report on the Capital Project detailing expenditure and cash flow to date.

Noted: the report, which showed the total spend on the project to the end of January 2011 against the budget. Everything was shown to be on track and this had also been examined by the internal auditors. There was now a new Phase 1E, which was the unforeseen removal of asbestos from Bowen, but the cost of this had been managed within the contingency fund.

8.5 Approved: the new annual schedule of business for the Finance Committee.

9 Mid-year financial forecast

Received: mid-year financial forecast to be submitted to the SFA.

Noted: that it was now known that cuts in the next year would amount to £142K and the paper demonstrated how the College intended to manage these. Concern was expressed at the prospect of the £110K reduction in spend to be achieved through a voluntary severance scheme. It was agreed that this would need to be very carefully managed to ensure that lost posts were not disproportionately clustered or ones

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which were absolutely essential to the College, and to consider how the work of those who took up the scheme would be spread amongst remaining staff. The Principal reported that Northern College were on their third round of compulsory redundancies and, if the voluntary scheme did not achieve the savings required, Ruskin would have to consider this.

Noted: that the word 'severance' should be inserted into the first bullet point of the report.

SC

10 Pension scheme

Received: a report and resolution regarding FSSU, a former pension scheme.

Noted: the General Secretary reported that this related to a former superannuation scheme. The College paid only one person a small pension of less than £300 per year, but was legally required to pass this resolution. The Chair drew the Governing Executive's attention to paragraph 3 of the resolution in particular.

Approved: the resolution regarding the FSSU.

11 Audit Committee

Received: the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 5 November 2010.

12 Policy review

12.1 **Received:** policy on safeguarding adults at risk.

Noted: that a great deal of work had been carried out on this policy (which came to the last meeting as the policy on safeguarding vulnerable adults) by the Principal, the Vice Chair and Des McDermott. It had now been simplified and fitted on to two sides of A4, which could be laminated and put on notice boards. There would be safeguarding training based on this policy in the College next week.

Approved: the policy on safeguarding adults at risk.

12.2 **Received:** student drug policy.

Noted: that this had been updated to reflect the law. The Principal had recently attended a course and learned about her legal search powers. The policy had been amended accordingly. An issue was raised regarding the flowery language in places, and it was suggested that it would be helpful to have this policy on two sides of A4. The Principal would look at this when the policy was next due for review.

Approved: the student drug policy.

12.3 **Noted:** that no amendments were proposed to the Financial Regulations this year.

13 Strategic aims

13.1 **Received:** key performance indicators and targets.

Noted: that this report came out of the discussion that took place at the last meeting of the Governing Executive. This paper set out targets and showed where they would be monitored and reported. This was not, as indicated on the agenda, before the meeting today for approval, as it was to go through the College's internal committees first.

14 Training session on inspection

Received: notes from training session held on 3 December 2010.

Noted: that the Ofsted criteria had changed since the College's last inspection.

15 Project Board

15.1 **Received:** minutes of the Project Board meeting held on 4 February 2011.

Noted: that the Principal had met with the contractors on site yesterday and that the experience of working with Leadbitter so far had been positive, in particular their community engagement.

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- 15.2 Received:** the 'Master' plan for the proposed redevelopment of Ruskin Fields.
Noted: that a team consisting of architects, planners and land agents had worked together to create the report in just one month. It was currently being considered informally by the Council to decide whether it could accompany the Barton Area Action Plan. The College would be informed in April as to whether they would be pursued together.

16 Phase 2

- 16.1 Received:** a verbal update on the contract for phase 2.
Noted: that the College had been undertaking additional due diligence prior to the signing of the contract due to a proposed change of parent company. Following the resolution of some minor technical points, it was anticipated that the contract would be signed next week. The parent company guarantee had been sent by the lawyers for signing and should also be in place next week. Preparatory work on site had already commenced and there was no effective delay in the timescale.

(The meeting adjourned for lunch at 12.45pm and reconvened at 1.20pm.)

17 Academic and Quality Standards Committee

- 17.1 Received:** minutes of Part A of the meeting held on 17 November 2010.
Noted: that student surveys had been carried out to ensure a student voice and quotes had been taken from these and used in displays around the College.
17.2 Noted: the IQER summative review self-evaluation document and student written submission. This covered all HE work at Ruskin and the QAA were monitoring it through a three year process, culminating in a summative review next term.

18 Principal's report

Received: a report from the Principal.
Agreed: that the Principal's report should in future include a section on external engagement by the College including for marketing and promotion. This would allow Governing Executive members to learn about the work that was currently being carried out and give them the opportunity to put forward ideas on how to market the distinct educational features of Ruskin.

AM

19 Student representative's report

Noted: that RSU elections had been contested as the ballot box had not made it to the Headington site. Elections were being re-run as a result.

20 Date of meetings for 2010/11

Noted: meeting dates for the remainder of this academic year, both at 11.00am at Walton Street:

- 20 May 2011
- 8 July 2011

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.30pm.