

Ruskin College

GOVERNING EXECUTIVE

Minutes of the five hundred and sixty-ninth meeting of the Governing Executive held on Friday 22nd November at 11.00am, at Ruskin College, Dunstan Road, Old Headington, Oxford, OX3 9BZ

Present: Councillor Van Coulter (ordinary member)

John Fray (Vice-Chair) (ordinary member)

Anne Hock (ordinary member)

Roger McKenzie (ordinary member)

David Norman

Carole Orgell-Rosen (Chair) (co-opted member)

Pearl Ryall (ordinary member)

Alan Shepherd (co-opted member)

Marva Small (co-opted member)

Dr Peter Dwyer (staff member)

Alan Irwin (staff member)

Guy Langton (staff member)

Professor Audrey Mullender (Principal) (staff member)

Kieron Winters (staff member)

Robin Hanford (student member)

Matthew Smith (student member)

Professor Harriet Bradley (Academic Adviser)

In attendance:

Sally Courtney (Finance Director)

Paul di Felice (Vice-Principal)

Helen Jeffries (Clerk)

Chris Mantel (Financial Statement Auditor)

Dr Chris Wilkes (General Secretary)

PART A

- 1 **Apologies for absence:** Action
Apologies were received from Miriam David, Jane Dixon, Jo Morris and John Raftery. Chris Baugh and Colin Taylor were absent without apologies.

- 2 **Declaration of interests**
Noted: Matthew Smith declared an interest in agenda item 9.2 relating to his residence at Cavalier House.

- 3 **Minutes silence following the recent deaths of John and Vi Hughes, former Principal and former Tutor at Ruskin College, and Marcus Allen, student on the Writing for Performance course.**
The Chair asked David Norman to pay tribute to John Hughes. David had known John Hughes for forty years. He paid tribute to John Hughes' rigorous intellect, which he brought to all his tutorials, and his creativity and ideas. David spoke of the massive contribution that John Hughes had made to Ruskin and to the Labour movement, and said that both John and his wife, Vi would be sorely missed. David had conveyed Ruskin College's condolences to the family.
The Chair paid tribute to Vi Hughes' enthusiasm and her commitment to the arts. She noted that Vi founded the Ransackers Project and that this would be her great legacy. She also recalled that Vi was very active with students with learning disabilities before many of them were recognised as learning disabilities.

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Matthew Smith (President of the Ruskin College Student Union) paid tribute to Marcus Allen, a student on the Writing for Performance course, who had recently died. Matthew noted that Marcus had been an exceptionally talented student, who had been happy to be given the opportunity to study at Ruskin. The other students in his cohort had been devastated by the loss. The RCSU had invited those students to read out some of Marcus's material at RCSU meetings.

There followed a minutes silence.

The Chair welcomed Paul di Felice the Vice-Principal and Professor Harriet Bradley, a new Academic Adviser to their first meeting.

4 Minutes

Confirmed: as a correct record the minutes of Part A of the Governing Executive meeting held on 5 July 2013

11.10am Roger McKenzie and Peter Dwyer joined the meeting.

5 Matters arising

Noted: that there were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

6 Election of new members

Approved: the election of Robin Hanford as student governor

7 Annual report and accounts

7.1 Received: the financial statements auditors' management letter for the year ended 31 July 2012, including the regularity audit.

Noted: by the Financial Statement Auditor that the Governing Executive needed to be aware of the risks involved in declaring the College a "going concern"-meaning that the College held sufficient cash resources to continue twelve months from the signing of the accounts.

Noted: that the College should insert an "emphasis of matter" into the accounts in order to draw the reader's attention to the risk of the going concern assumption.

Noted: that plans were in place to arrange an overdraft facility with the Co-Op bank, and that representatives of the College would be meeting with the Bank in the week following the meeting. Representatives would be frank about the situation.

Noted: that the loan had been secured on the values of the residential blocks and Stoke House, and that it had been agreed that these buildings should be revalued. If the value were to have increased it would give the bank more security on the loan.

Noted: that it had been the Audit Committee's view that cash reserves and the head room they allowed were sufficient for the twelve months ahead.

Noted: that the terms of the loan were not affected by the changing situation within the Co-op bank.

7.2 Received: the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 July 2013 and the audit representations letter.

Noted: that UCU had been against the Ruskin Fields project and saw it as a major risk, the like of which the College could no longer take.

Noted: that the work done on the nature of the Ruskin Fields could be used in the future.

Approved: the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 July 2013 and the audit representations letter.

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8 Audit Committee

- 8.1 Received:** the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 23 September 2013
- 8.2 Received:** the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 21st October 2013
- 8.3 Received:** the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 8th November 2013
Noted: by the Chair of Audit Committee that the first two sets of minutes related to two extraordinary meetings of the Audit Committee at which revisions to the Joint Audit Code of Practice (JACOP) were discussed, and work was done on preparing for the change in the internal audit system.
- 8.4 Received:** the internal audit annual report for 2012/13
- 8.5 Approved:** the risk management annual report 2012/13
- 8.6 Received:** the Audit Committee annual report for 2012/13
Noted: by the Chair of the Audit Committee that this report would change in the future according to the recently revised Audit Committee Terms of Reference.
- 8.7 Received:** the risk management plan
- 8.8 Received:** the Internal Audit Plan for 2013/14
Noted: that the risk management plan identified the risks to the College and that major emphasis had been placed on strategic aim 4, that of achieving financial stability. The Internal Audit Plan re-organised the internal audit for the College. These two papers looked forward, whilst the earlier papers all related to the previous academic year.
Noted: that a discussion ensued during which the following points were made;
- Concern was expressed over the ease at which money can be lost through catering and residential services
 - A long discussion had taken place at Audit Committee on 8th November about catering costs
 - That there was also a potential for gain in these areas.
 - That the risk regarding the tutorial system being rendered unaffordable by the reduction in funding from the Skills Funding Association (SFA), was most troubling to students, and that a strong tutorial system would aid retention.
 - That the staff governors wanted to reassure the Governing Executive and students that tutors were aware of the challenges faced and were working closely with the Vice-Principal and the General Secretary.
 - That the tutorial system was unique at Ruskin.
- Approved:** the risk management plan and the Internal audit plan for 2013/14.

9 Finance Committee

- 9.1 Received:** the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 5 July 2013
- 9.2 Received:** the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 25 October 2013
Noted: that the Finance Committee had urged the College to re-negotiate the terms of the lease for external residential provision. The housing association involved were not prepared to change the terms of the lease. In those circumstances the College could not afford to continue to subsidise the cost of the rooms to students. To that end the General Secretary recommended that the College invoke the break clause within the agreement, giving notice by 30th November and ending the lease of rooms by the end of the academic year.
Noted: that if the break clause were invoked early, the housing association may still let rooms to Ruskin students on an individual basis and that the College could

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possibly help with deposits.

Noted: that the cost of accommodation was the main issue for students.

Noted: that a vote was taken on invoking the break clause in the contract for external residential provision, which was carried by a majority.

Agreed: to invoke the break clause.

9.3 Received: a verbal report on the financial position to the end of October 2013

Tabled: a paper on tuition fee forecast for 2013/14.

Noted: that there had been a reduction in student numbers from the budgeted position. Progression numbers had been discussed with the programme co-ordinators. There had been lower recruitment in some areas of CertHE. Generally enrolment was better than last year.

9.4 Received: a paper on the principles relating to tuition fee setting.

Noted: that this paper showed how the College would fund Higher Education provision in the future. From 2014/15 CertHE would be funded through tuition fees and not by the SFA. This meant that the College would receive £4,265 less per student.

Noted: that fees were originally set at £8,500 for 2012/13. They were reduced so that the College could qualify to bid for extra student numbers with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). This process had since been abandoned by HEFCE. The average undergraduate tuition fee was £8,610.

Noted: that the College would set differing fees for post-graduate qualifications based on the delivery method.

Noted: that the principles underlying the tuition fee setting were:

- A fully costed HE provision, funded through tuition fee income.
- The College would set a common undergraduate rate.
- The College would set differential post graduate rates.
- From 2015/16 the College would set fees to cover the full costs of undergraduate programmes, based on direct costs, and a common percentage on-cost for all indirect costs.

Noted: that the management team would discuss the principles with cost centre managers and Academic Co-ordinators. The management team would also be meeting with academic staff before Christmas to look at outreach, recruitment and retention. There would be a College-wide discussion on ways to deliver the HE curriculum.

Noted: that it was reassuring for staff and UCU that a meeting had been arranged.

Noted: that students are now graduating with a £27k debt.

Noted: that the College needed to work in partnership with students and that the RCSU would work to get the best deal for students.

Noted: that the College need to think about its marketing strategy, and put more effort and energy into marketing.

Noted: by the Principal that money was not available for a large marketing campaign. However the College was using word of mouth and news coverage to market opportunities. The next big challenge would be to raise money for bursaries and scholarships. The College was working on a list of people who had supported Ruskin in the past. The College was taking on an intern to work on developing that in the spring.

Noted: that commercial lettings should have a dedicated space on the website and perhaps be advertised in the prospectus.

Noted: that Conferences were to have a dedicated page on the website.

Approved by a show of hands: the principles relating to tuition fee setting.

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10 Received: the counter indemnity from the Co-op bank relating to the Section 106 agreement arising from planning permission.

Approved: the counter indemnity from the Co-op bank relating to the Section 106 agreement arising from planning permission.

11 Strategic Action Plan

Received: the revised strategic action plan

The Vice-Principal took the Executive through aims 1-3. The following points were noted:

- It was important to review the current strategy and work on Access to the Higher Education (Access to HE) programme
- The Access to HE programme would be in Applied Social Science.
- There would be a revised short course programme offer, inspired by ongoing market research. There was a big demand for courses based around personal development.
- Rachel Hemstock had done a lot of outreach work.
- Best practice in teaching and learning sharing sessions would be put in place for the New Year.
- This would link to the Observation Teaching and Learning (OTL) system.
- Strategic aim 2 was based around the action plan from Ofsted (following the inspection last year)
- A revised staff development plan would be monitored by AQSC
- The College was looking at ways to implement e-learning that were cost-effective.
- The Vice-Principal would now lead on safeguarding policies and procedures and would be sharing best practice with local safeguarding boards.

A discussion ensued during which the following points were made;

- It was felt that strategic aim 1 should specifically mention the importance of the number of black students, under the second action point and include the improvement of success rates for disabled students.
- Strategic aim 4 should include fundraising, including efforts to create income streams from all in the College-utilising the skills of the entrepreneurs on the Foundation Degree in Business and Social Enterprise.

Approved: the Strategic Action Plan with amendments as above

12 Search Committee

12.1 Received: the minutes of the Search Committee meeting held on 5th November 2013

Noted: the Committee's approval of the annual nominations from Oxford City Council.

Noted: the Committee's approval of the nomination of Luke Crawley from BECTU to Council

Noted: the Committee's approval of the co-option of Bert Clough to Council

Noted: the Committee's approval of further terms of office for all co-opted members.

Noted: the Committee's approval of Kate Beeby as a staff representative to Council.

Noted: the Committee's review of attendance to Executive committees, and the actions taken to try to improve poor attendance.

Noted: the Committee's approval of a third term of office for Jane Dixon on Governing Executive.

Noted: the Committee's approval of the nomination of Guy Langton to the Search Committee.

Noted: that the minutes were approved.

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12.2 Received: a verbal report on the meeting of the Search Committee held on November 22nd 2013

Noted: that those members of Governing Executive with poor attendance had been contacted, but that no response had been received.

Noted: the Committee's approval of the Oxford Playhouse nomination of their Producer, Michelle Walker to Council.

Noted: the Committee's approval of the nomination of Rob Hancock and Kevin Rowan as TUC representatives to Council.

Noted: the Committee's approval of the nomination of Robin Hanford as student representative to the Council.

Noted: the Committee's approval of the nomination of Robin Hanford as student governor.

Noted: the nomination of Rob Hancock to the Governing Executive.

13 Annual Governing Executive self-assessment exercise

Received: the feedback from the annual self-assessment exercise.

Noted: the comments made on the self-assessment forms, including those on timing.

Noted: that some members of the Governing Executive felt that meetings needed to be taken at a slower pace as more time was needed to discuss the challenges faced by the College.

Noted: the suggestion that meetings start earlier.

Noted: that more time was required for focused discussions on marketing and other challenges to the College and that the agenda needed to be reviewed.

Noted: the suggestion that the role of Council should be reviewed, and that perhaps there should be initial discussion of issues at Council followed up at Governing Executive.

Noted: a suggestion of shorter meetings followed by an afternoon workshop.

Noted: that the RCSU will be inviting members of Governing Executive to address a general meeting.

Noted: that there may be access problems for governors with disabilities if a meeting moves too quickly.

Noted: that it would be helpful for governors to speak at staff conferences, and be able to hear staff views.

Noted: that the Chair hoped to be able to attend the staff conference in January.

Noted: the suggestion of a working lunch.

Noted: the suggestion that there should be an overall review of the ways of working, and that new ways of conducting business should be considered.

Noted: the suggestion that working committees might be formed to discuss issues.

Agreed: that a succinct proposal for ways of finding more time in Governing Executive meetings be brought to the March meeting. Governors to send ideas to the Clerk. Discussion to be added to the agenda for March meeting.

**Governors
Clerk**

14 Annual update of Governing Executive members' register of interests

Received: the Governors' register of interest form.

Noted: that it was important to fill in the form and return to the Clerk as this forms part of the annual audit.

15 Policies

15.1 Received: the revised Critical Incident Policy

Noted: that this policy had been reviewed under the Policy Review Schedule and contained minor revisions.

Approved: the revised Critical Incident Policy

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- 15.2 Received:** the revised Safeguarding Children Policy
Noted: that this policy is not often used, and that promotional content had been removed.
Approved: the revised Safeguarding Children Policy
- 15.3 Received:** the revised Policy on Safeguarding Adults at Risk.
Noted: that definitions in the document had been updated and the Vice-Principal was now named as Safeguarding Officer.
Approved: the revised Policy on Safeguarding Adults at Risk
- Noted:** that brief updates to policies did not require a great deal of discussion. However if a policy was new or extensively revised a full briefing would be given.
Noted: that the Clerk needed to review the colours and fonts used when marking up policies in order to ensure accessibility. **Clerk**
- 15.4 Received:** the revised HE Admissions Policy
Noted: that the revised policy had been to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
Noted: that there were two typographical errors. Para 2.14 ended in an extraneous T-to be removed. Para 3.7 and 3.8 discussed CATS points. This should read 'credit' points. **Clerk**
Noted: following a query on payment in advance from international students, that it is a legal requirement that students from abroad pay in advance for their studies.
Approved: the revised HE Admissions Policy with the above amendments.
- 15.5 Received for consideration:** the Association of College's (AOC) Guidelines and model Public Interest Disclosure Policy.
Noted: that the previous version seen by the Governing Executive had been based on another College's policy. The AOC guidelines had been received at a later date and appeared to cover more and provide more guidance.
Noted: that this policy was substantially better than the current one, and that all policies affecting contracts of employment should be carefully reviewed and become part of the culture of the College.
Noted: that the Policy Review Schedule would show governors how policies are reviewed and agreed through the College. AOC models were often agreed at a national level between the AOC and unions and were therefore most useful.
Agreed: that governors should review the model policy and send through suggestions on content to the Clerk in time for the next meeting.
Agreed: that the Policy Schedule would be sent out for reference with the papers for the next meeting. **Clerk**
The meeting broke for lunch at 1.00pm and returned at 1.35pm
- 16 Student Union Constitution**
Received: the new Ruskin College Student Union (RCSU) constitution
 The President of the RCSU introduced the constitution.
Noted: that the name of the Union had been changed from Ruskin Student's Union (RSU) to Ruskin College Student's Union (RCSU).
Noted: that the Union had introduced a new short course officer and other new officers after a strong process of elections.
Noted: that the Union had received compliments on the new constitution from people within the wider student movement.
Noted: that a number of amendments needed to be made including some spelling

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errors, guidance notes for future students on elections, representation on the Audit Committee

Approved: with the above amendments

17 Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)

17.1 Received: minutes of Part A of the meeting held on 27 September 2013.

Noted: that the Vice-Principal would chair the Committee from now on.

17.2 Received: the self-assessment report grades.

The Vice-Principal introduced the report.

Noted: that the paper before the Executive was a synopsis draft, and that a longer document would go to the next AQSC.

Noted: that the grade given was 2, and that this used the Ofsted rationale and focused on outcomes.

Noted: that overall the College success rate was 90%, and that the outcomes for the trade union centre were outstanding at 90% or more.

Noted: that there were six 'Areas of Improvement', including closing the gap in success rates between students with a disability and those without and the need to rigorously moderate lesson observation reports.

Approved: the self-assessment report grades.

18 Principal's report

Received: a report from the Principal

Noted: that this was the Principal's final Governing Executive meeting and that she had been at the College for almost ten years. The Principal said that she had enjoyed an amazing decade. She thanked the current and former Chair of the Governing Executive for their unstinting support, and gave thanks to the General Secretary for covering her sick leave.

She also thanked the staff and students and wished everyone good luck.

The Chair then asked the former Chair David Norman to speak.

Councillor Norman noted that he had had the good fortune to know well the last five Principals of Ruskin College, and that it was one of the toughest jobs in the Labour movement. He noted the Principal's successful academic career at Nottingham and Warwick Universities, and that she was the first ever woman Principal at Ruskin. The new building was a tribute to the Principal's tenacity and drive and was her legacy to the College. The Principal had devoted a large amount of time to raising and monitoring academic standards, without the help of a Vice-Principal (apart from during the last few months). Councillor Norman had resolved to be the Principal's critical friend and had greatly enjoyed working with her. On behalf of past students and the Governing Executive he wished the Principal a long and happy retirement.

The Principal thanked Councillor Norman and the Governing Executive for their good wishes.

19 Student Representatives report

Received: a verbal update on the work of the Ruskin College Students Union (RCSU).

The President of the RCSU wished the Principal best wishes in her retirement.

He noted that the RCSU had held its first Fresher's Fair at the beginning of the academic year, which was a great success and that the RCSU was engaging more with part-time students and wanted to get in touch with community learners. There would be elections over the next couple of weeks for the RCSU, and student engagement was generally higher than in the past. The President was proud of what the RCSU had achieved so far, and listed issues on which it would be working in the

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near future, including careers, international students, refugees and asylum seekers and working with students with disabilities.

The Chair congratulated the RCSU on the success of the Fresher's Fair.

20 Meeting dates for 2013/14

Noted: the meeting dates for the remainder of the year

- 7 March 2014
- 16 May 2014
- 4 July 2014 (9.30am start)

There being no further business Part A of the meeting closed at 2.15pm

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

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