

# Kingston University London

## MINUTES BOARD OF GOVERNORS

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 2008 IN THE TOWN HOUSE, PENRHYN ROAD CENTRE

#### Present:

Gren Collings (Chair), George Alexandrou, Nick Badman, Olrick Coker, Ann Corrigan, Sara Drake, Robert Green, Peter Kopelman, Roderic Lyne, Phil Molyneux, Tim Oliver, Derek Osbourne, David Reardon, Peter Scott, Christine Swabey, David Taylor, Colin Watts and Clarissa Wilks

#### In attendance:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Employer Engagement), Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Affairs), Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise), Finance Director, University Secretary, Head of Secretariat, Minuting Clerk

The Chair welcomed Peter Kopelman, the recently appointed Principal of St George's University of London, to his first meeting of the Board.

#### 27.0 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Stephen Cox, Deirdre Ferrier, Mark Kierstan, Stephen King, Andy Lomax and Thalia Marriott.

#### 28.0 Minutes of the Board of Governors Meeting held on 12 March 2008

28.1 The Minutes were approved.

#### 29.0 Matters Arising

29.1 Campus Development Plan:

It was agreed this minute be confidential.  
(See *Confidential Minutes attached*)

29.2 There were no other matters arising.

### **30.0 Approval of the revised Student Disciplinary Procedure** (Paper BG 38/08)

- 30.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that the revised Student Disciplinary Procedure had been discussed in detail by the Quality Enhancement Committee, the Executive Board and KUSU. The key objectives of the revised Procedure were to clarify the separate stages of the process and the different types of misconduct, and also to increase the involvement of faculties and departments. It was believed that the revised procedure would be a fairer system and easier to administer.
- 30.2 The Board discussed the revised procedure, which involved some variation with the involvement of different groups of people depending on the type of offence in question, whilst following a similar basic process.
- 30.3 It was noted that persistent low level misconduct was monitored and at times this could escalate into serious misconduct and possible exclusion. Misconduct, which constituted reckless behaviour without intent would normally be treated as minor.
- 30.4 Governors' involvement in the appeals process was unchanged and related to cases of gross misconduct only. The decision to use an internal process for appeals at all other levels was an issue of proportionality. It had previously been agreed that it was not practical to involve governors in appeals relating to minor misconduct as there was a high volume of such cases (100 – 200 each year). It was confirmed that KUSU supported this approach. Cases where the internal process was exhausted could be taken by the student to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, although this rarely happened.
- 30.5 The revised Procedure would be communicated to students and staff in a number of ways, including copies of the Procedure and flow chart information being made available in the Student Affairs Office and learning resource centres. It was also planned to produce a single page document setting out the principles of behaviour expectations, for circulating to all new students.
- 30.6 With regard to academic misconduct, it was noted that plagiarism was a significant problem across the HE sector. This was partly due to the common-place practice in schools and FE colleges of students acquiring information from the internet, and failing to attribute the source material. It was also difficult for some students to bridge the gap between schools and university. Serious cases of plagiarism were handled by the Academic Board and this information was not normally provided to the Board. It was agreed that a report with indicative figures would be included on a future Board agenda.
- 30.7 It was confirmed that decisions relating to cases of gross misconduct (normally involving expulsion from the University) were made on committee recommendation rather than by individuals. Decisions relating to the first

stage of cases of lower level misconduct were made within the faculties or the Student Affairs Office. This issue would be clarified in the Procedure.

30.8 The Procedure had been checked and approved by the University's internal legal adviser.

30.9 It was agreed that, subject to clarification of text as detailed above, the Procedure be approved and put into effect, with a review in twelve months.

It was resolved that

The Board approve the revised Student Disciplinary Procedure, subject to clarification of text as detailed in Minute 30.

Action      *Report on approach to plagiarism, including numbers of cases, to Board of Governors later in the year (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)*

*Review of revised Student Disciplinary Procedure in May 2009  
(Deputy Vice-Chancellor)*

**31.0 Approval of the appointment of external auditors on the recommendation of the Audit Committee**  
(Paper BG 39/08)

31.1 David Taylor, as Chair of the Audit Committee, reported on the background to the appointment of new external auditors. The University had been dissatisfied with the performance of the previous external auditors for some time, and it had therefore been decided to review the provision of external audit services. Four companies were subsequently invited to tender and following the tender exercise, BDO Stoy Hayward were unanimously selected as the preferred supplier. It was noted that, although BDO Stoy Hayward had a smaller market share overall, they had a high level of relevant experience in the HE sector.

It was resolved that

The Board approve the appointment of BDO Stoy Hayward as the University's provider of external audit services, on the recommendation of the Audit Committee.

**32.0 Approval of Property Leases**  
(Paper BG 40/08 - *confidential*)

32.1 The University Secretary reported that the University currently used a range of leased properties but the long term objective was to reduce this number. Three of the leases had recently reached the renewal stage.

- 32.2 An opportunity had arisen to expand the University's occupancy of Swan Wing into the ground floor, which coincided with a requirement for further space. It had therefore been decided to surrender the remaining leases for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors, and negotiate a new package for all three floors, which would address the need for more space and allow greater flexibility in the use of Swan Wing and River House. Whilst agreement on leases would normally be brought to the Board for its approval, a variety of circumstances had necessitated Chair's Action in this case. The Board approved Chair's Action in respect of renewing the lease on Swan Wing.
- 32.3 The University had rented part of the Surrey Club in Penrhyn Road for a number of years and requested the Board's approval for an extension of the lease for a further six years at a total rental of £558,754 with a three-year break clause. The Board approved the extension of the Surrey Club lease.
- 32.4 The lease on Millennium House, in central Kingston, was due for renewal in two months' time and negotiations were underway to secure a five-year extension. However, it was likely that the landlord would require completion prior to the next Board of Governors' meeting in July, and therefore it was possible that Chair's Action may be required, subject to agreement of appropriate lease conditions. The Board agreed that Chair's Action be taken if necessary.
- 32.5 It was noted that under normal circumstances there would be sufficient planning time with regard to leases and any such decisions would be presented to the Board for its approval in the usual way.

It was resolved that

The Board approve Chair's Action on the signing of the lease of Swan Wing;

The Board authorise the extension of the lease on the Surrey Club;

The Board authorise Chairs' Action, if required, on the signing of the extended lease for Millennium House, with details to be reported to the next Board meeting in July.

### **33.0 Vice-Chancellor's Report** (Paper BG 41/08)

#### Partnership Issues

##### 33.1 St George's University of London

33.1.1 The Vice-Chancellor reiterated the position discussed at the last Board meeting, that St George's had formally requested proposals from Kingston, Surrey and Royal Holloway, as part of its Options Review. Attached to the Vice-Chancellor's report was the formal request to Kingston from Peter Kopelman, Principal of SGUL together with the Options Review framework and timetable.

33.1.2 Possible areas of difficulty for Kingston were two of the criteria listed under 'Academic Excellence' relating to international reputation and biomedical research. However, it was unlikely that any of the three potential partners would satisfy all the stated criteria.

33.1.3 Jim Port of JM Consulting had been commissioned to assist in the development of the University's proposal, which he would present to the Board of Governors at its meeting in July.

33.1.4 Preliminary meetings between Kingston and SGUL had resulted in constructive discussions and future meetings, both formal and informal, were planned with Surrey and Royal Holloway, as well as SGUL. It was suggested that Jim Port might usefully have meetings with other healthcare trusts, if time permitted.

33.1.5 Peter Kopelman stated that it was SGUL's priority to reach a decision about its future as soon as possible, and that it was committed to retaining its South West London location. He noted the importance of training healthcare professionals, as well as developing research, and stated that all relevant factors would be taken into consideration in the Options Review. An underlying issue was to ensure the long-term sustainability of St George's.

## 33.2 University of London

33.2.1 The Vice-Chancellor reported on ongoing discussions about the possibility of joining the University of London, including meetings with the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, Sir Graeme Davies.

33.2.2 Two main issues were highlighted. Firstly, Kingston's research profile was an important factor, and it was likely that the outcome of the forthcoming RAE would have a significant effect on the assessment of Kingston as an appropriate partner. Secondly, Kingston would not wish to risk rejection of its application.

33.2.3 As previously reported, the University of London (UoL) was revising its statutes and it was anticipated that all constitutional matters would shortly be completed. It was anticipated that UoL's process of inviting new members would start in the spring of 2009, which would fit well with the timescale of St George's Options Review, the outcome of which would have a significant impact on Kingston's decision in applying to join UoL. The importance of Kingston's relationship with St George's in this context was noted.

33.2.4 The Board noted the advantages to Kingston of joining the University of London, including the benefit of branding, giving Kingston a higher profile, and potential involvement with UoL partnerships. It was noted that KUSU was also positive about applying to join UoL.

## 33.3 South West London Academic Network

33.3.1 The Vice-Chancellor reported on two important meetings recently held relating to the SWan alliance. The first meeting was of the SWan

Management Board, which included lay governors and student representatives, and which received encouraging reports of significant progress from the three Institute Directors. The second meeting was between SWan representatives and HEFCE to review progress on the Strategic Development Fund bid. It was reported that, despite some degree of uncertainty on account of the SGUL Options Review, this meeting went well and HEFCE appeared to be generally satisfied with the progress of the alliance.

33.2.2 It was agreed that a single annual report on the SWan alliance would be circulated to all three institutions. It was reported that an information strategy was in development and would be discussed at the next meeting of the SWan Executive Board.

33.2.3 A SWan group had been convened to consider the student experience. The need to focus on the differing needs and perspectives of the three student bodies was noted.

## Kingston Issues

### 33.4 National Student Survey

33.4.1 It had been reported at the last Board meeting in March that a complaint had been made to HEFCE that students in Psychology had been bullied into giving, or persuaded to give, higher scores in the National Student Survey (NSS), than they might otherwise have been inclined to do. This matter had subsequently undergone an internal investigation and the outcome had been reported to HEFCE, who had indicated it was satisfied with the action being taken by the University. Since then, the incident had become the subject of considerable press coverage, and students from several institutions had reported similar occurrences. This had created a new issue of questioning the effectiveness of the NSS questionnaire, which would appear to be the main area of concern from HEFCE's perspective.

33.4.2 The Vice-Chancellor had responded by issuing a statement, reproduced in paper BG 41/08, stating that this was believed to be an isolated incident, and that the intention was to underline more clearly the University's position with regard to the NSS and issue a set of guidelines for circulation to staff to eliminate any ambiguity and avoid a possible repetition of any misunderstanding in the future.

33.4.3 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor noted that since the Board's discussion on the NSS at the Away Day in December 2007, much work had been done on introducing new initiatives to improve the student experience. It was encouraging that the NSS responses at the University had been higher than the national average.

33.4.4 It was reported that HEFCE was considering suppressing this year's NSS results relating to the Psychology department, and was also considering instigating an investigation into the matter by the Quality Assurance Agency. However, the University believed that it would be more appropriate to initiate

its own detailed investigation with possible independent assistance. The Board supported the University's intended course of action.

### 33.5 Applications and Offers

33.5.1 The latest figures showed a similar pattern to previous reports. There had been a significant increase in both home/EU and overseas postgraduate applications and, with the exception of the Faculties of Art, Design & Architecture and Health & Social Care Sciences, a decline in home/EU and overseas undergraduate applications, which was broadly in line with national trends. Although the overall number of the University's applicants had declined in comparison to the national average, this was not seen as a problem and it was anticipated that the University's targets this year would be achieved.

### 33.6 League Tables

33.6.1 It was reported that the University's position had slipped in the two recently published league tables – *the Guardian* and *the Independent*. This was partly as a result of the replacement of the TQA scores by NSS results, but other problem areas were staff / student ratios, career prospects and the proportion of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2-1 degrees.

33.6.2 It was important to ensure an appropriate balance between academic and administrative staff numbers. However, during the past year there had been no increase in academic staff despite a rise in student numbers, whilst the number of administrative staff had increased across the University, both in departments and faculties. This was partly as a result of course development, but the matter would be investigated further and a report made to the Board of Governors in due course.

33.6.3 With regard to career prospects, it was noted that the University's proportion of 1<sup>st</sup> class and 2-1 degrees had declined against the national average, which had an inevitable impact on employment prospects. It was acknowledged that this was a sensitive area, which the University had already taken steps to address. It was important to ensure the fair treatment of students, whilst also ensuring against any possible action which could be seen as a lowering of standards.

33.6.4 It was noted that league tables could be affected by the manner in which information was produced and publicised. The Pro Vice-Chancellor for External Affairs was leading a group to consider how the University could improve its league table performance.

Action: *Report to Board on outcome of investigation on balance between academic and administrative staff recruitment (Vice-Chancellor)*

*Derek Osbourne left the meeting.*

### **34.0 Report on the Strategic Plan** (Paper BG 42/08)

- 34.1 The Vice-Chancellor noted it had originally been intended that the Strategic Plan would be presented for Board approval at its meeting in July 2008. However, it was now proposed that there should be further discussion by the Board in July and that a final report would be presented for Board approval in September, by which time there should be greater clarity over government funding and the likely direction of the SGUL Options Review. The main purpose of today's discussion was to consider the major themes of the Plan rather than specific details.
- 34.2 It was suggested that it would be useful to include a progress report on scenario planning work at the July meeting.
- 34.3 The Plan had been discussed in detail by the Executive and Academic Boards, which had led to a number of emerging issues and identification of key strategic themes for the University. However, a number of options were being kept open, allowing the University greater adaptability and the ability to respond quickly to change. It was important that the Plan was flexible enough to adapt to any unexpected opportunities.
- 34.4 The key themes included the University's identity as a comprehensive and open institution, and the need to develop a clearer academic framework as the University moved into a more constrained environment where there may be a greater requirement to make more selective choices. There would be a need to develop further partnerships and build on existing partnerships such as SWan and SGUL, FE colleges and industrial partners. Another key area was the improvement of the student experience and the need to match specific areas of need to the relevant student groups.
- 34.5 The emerging theme was that the University's core values should be based on accessibility and inclusiveness, combined with academic excellence and the development of a stronger research profile. The outcome of the current RAE would be instrumental in this context.
- 34.6 It was suggested that the new Strategic Plan should include an executive summary, with a clear statement of the University's identity and particular strengths. It was important that the Strategy was an evolving document, with a specific number of achievable objectives and an agreed implementation plan to guide the University through the next five years, which was seen as a defining period.
- 34.7 The importance of linking the Strategic Plan to the operational plan and annual planning process, including resource allocation, was noted.
- 34.8 The Board discussed the possibility of increasing the use of external benchmarking, directly aligned to the University's identified priorities. However, although league table information was valuable, it was important not to allow the Strategy to become defined by a specific methodology. It

was noted that a successful approach on the part of the University would be reflected in the league tables.

- 34.9 The Board agreed that approval of the new Strategic Plan should be postponed until its meeting on 24 September, with a further draft to be considered by the Board at its meeting on 16 July. It was also agreed that the next iteration of the draft Plan would include details of benchmarks in which the University was seeking improvement.

Action *Further draft Strategic Plan to include a progress report on Scenario Planning to Board of Governors in July and final version for approval in September 2008 (Vice-Chancellor)*

### **35.0 Progress report on the Enterprise Strategy** (Paper BG 34/08)

- 35.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Enterprise noted that the Board had discussed and approved the Enterprise Strategy in May 2007, at which time it was agreed that a progress report would be made in a year's time.
- 35.2 Since then, there had been some significant changes. The previous Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Enterprise had left the University, and the area of Enterprise had subsequently been combined with Research under one Pro Vice-Chancellor. A new Director of Enterprise had been appointed in February, and further changes were in progress.
- 35.3 The key points were summarised in the progress report. An overview of the area of Enterprise was being undertaken across the entire University. The work of the Enterprise Exchange would be re-structured and streamlined, ensuring the appropriate level of overlap between faculties, departments and the Exchange.
- 35.4 Work was continuing on developing the Enterprise Strategy and Implementation Plan, with anticipated completion in September 2008, at which time a further report would be made to the Board of Governors.
- 35.5 It was confirmed that the cost of the Enterprise activity would be covered by funding from the Higher Education Innovation Fund.
- 35.6 The Board thanked the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Enterprise for a clear and comprehensive report.

Action *Further report to Board following completion of Enterprise Strategy and Implementation Plan (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Enterprise)*

### **36.0\* Finance Report for March 2008** (Paper BG 44/08)

- 36.1 The Board noted the Finance Report for March 2008.

**37.0\* Report on Health and Safety Metrics**  
(Paper BG 45/08)

37.1 The Board noted the Report on Health and Safety Metrics.

**38.0\* HEFCE's assessment of institutional risk**

38.1 The Board noted HEFCE's assessment of institutional risk.

**39.0\* Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 24 April 2008**

39.1 The Board noted the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting.

**40.0 Draft Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 8 May 2008**

40.1 It was reported that the external auditors had brought to the attention of the Audit Committee, the requirement for all directors of subsidiary companies to sign an undertaking that full disclosures had been made to the auditors. This information would be circulated to relevant parties by the University Secretary.

Action *Note to be circulated from the University Secretary to directors of the University's subsidiary companies as detailed above (University Secretary)*

**41.0 Any other business**

41.1 There was no other business.

**42.0 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board of Governors was scheduled for Wednesday 16 July 2008 in the Town House at Penrhyn Road.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 10.50am.