

Council

2 April 2020

Skype meeting, 3pm

Present: Dinah Caine (Chair), Lauren Corelli, Lynn Pearcy, Rodger Kibble, Frances Corner, David Reddaway, Kierin Offlands, Aaron Porter, Carol Rue, Philip Stoltzfus, Susan Dilly, Suhail Malik, David Oswell, Elisabeth Hill, Ben Fowler, Conrad Heyns, Monika Barnes, Pam Raynor, Ian Borman, Andrew Laurence, John Price

In attendance: Helen Watson, Nirmal Borkhataria, Carol Ford, Melanie Rimmer, Matthew Brooks (moderator), John Dickinson- Lilley, Sally Priddle

Apologies: Joe Leam

Due to the nature of the meeting, the agenda was not divided into open and confidential business, each item indicated whether it was an open or closed item. The minutes have been drafted into an open and closed set so that the open set can be shared and published.

OPEN BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence

Received:

- 1.1 Joe Leam
 - 1.2 Send good wishes to Joe
 - 1.3 The Chair welcomed Lauren Corelli as President Elect
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2. Identification of Items for Discussion

- 2.1 No items were requested for discussion.
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3. Chair's Action

- 3.1 The Chair had taken no action on behalf of Council since the last meeting.
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4. Minutes

Received:

- 4.1 Minutes from meeting on 20th November 2019 and Away Day on 21st January 2020.

Noted:

- 4.2 The Chair noted that the College and Council had received a high number of communications regarding lack of consultation in relation to Evolving Goldsmiths. She outlined that the November Council meeting and at the January Away Day there were numerous commitments by SMT to engage with the staff community. Consultation was intended to be central to the strategies developed as a result of Evolving Goldsmiths.
- 4.3 Council had aimed for processes to be more transparent and offer more opportunities for engagement.
- 4.4 It was reported that the Students' Union had requested an open meeting with members of the College and this had not been arranged.
- 4.5 The Students' Union raised concerns about the focus on against sexual violence work, it appeared that the work was often de-prioritised. It was also reported that the racial justice group had still not met.
- 4.6 Open meetings had been planned with Council members and the Heads of Departments and Professors however the pandemic had stopped these from proceeding.
- 4.7 The Chair of Council reported that she would be happy to do an open meeting with students once the community had returned to campus.
- 4.8 It was reported that the Chair had outlined in November that she would be providing written reports going forward however due to the pandemic this had not been possible for the Spring meeting. A written report would be provided in the future to outline the work and impact of the Chair's role on behalf of Goldsmiths.
- 4.9 It was reported that the correspondence since the launch of Evolving Goldsmiths demonstrated that three key issues had been conflated. The decision regarding strengthening the leadership team to address a number of ongoing issues had been informed by the Council, in the previous year, scrutinising performance and KPIs relating to the College's existing strategy. In addition, the need to develop and improve the teaching offer and excellence of delivery to support increased recruitment and better retention had also been an ongoing matter of concern for Council. January's financial position had led to the launch of the Voluntary Severance Scheme and had given urgency to the other two issues.
- 4.10 Council supported the direction of travel of Evolving Goldsmiths to establish work streams which intended to address underlying areas for improvement.

Resolved:

- 4.11 The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

5. Actions

Received:

- 5.1 Updates on actions from previous meetings – Open and Reserved

Noted:

- 5.2 All actions were completed or on track.
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6. Warden's Report

Received:

- 6.1 Warden's Report to Council (19-377)

Noted:

- 6.2 There had been a significant number of issues with admissions across the sector. Some students had received unconditional offers from other institutions; the OfS and the government had been clear that this was not an acceptable approach.
- 6.3 There were concerns around international students and the gap in recruitment for other institutions who would look to fill their cohorts with domestic students. This would be a significant issue for Goldsmiths.
- 6.4 There were currently overseas students on campus who had been unable to return to their home countries.
- 6.5 There were concerns about ILTS exams and processing Visas and these factors having a further impact on recruitment. Institutions were lobbying the government on these points.
- 6.6 It was possible that billions could be lost across the sector as a result of recruitment. There were ongoing discussions about how the government could support across the sector.
- 6.7 It was hard for the Institution to plan without clarity on the support from the government.
- 6.8 There was a lack of clarity around the retention scheme for workers within universities, across all levels and categories.
- 6.9 OfS has provided regular communications outlining their expectations that quality should not be undermined in any way. The College was moving teaching and resources online and making sure that students were not disadvantaged in any way.
- 6.10 The College was also looking at its civic role and how it could support society during this crisis.

- 6.11 There were so many complexities around the situation, it was important that students were continually assured on what the College was doing to support them.
- 6.12 Academic Board were reviewing changes required for assessments and student provision and how they should be handled. There was not yet an adequate solution for practice based assessments.
- 6.13 Students who paid higher fees were now requesting compensation because the provision had not met their expectations.
- 6.14 The College were making plans to delay showcases for students to ensure they got full opportunities.
- 6.15 It was essential that quality and standards were maintained.
- 6.16 The Warden reported that she was advocating for students with the OfS and government including looking at financial aid for students and extensions to Visas.
- 6.17 Concerns were raised that the Warden's report did not mention Evolving Goldsmiths or the racial justice work.
- 6.18 It was reported that the REF had been postponed. The College was working with UKRI and Research England. The report outlined that a small number of departments and individuals secured research income, in the current climate a question remained over whether the research strategy should be changed.
- 6.19 A small number of departments were able to secure research grants. In the arts and humanities areas there were fellowships and other opportunities to generate income. However, the amounts were smaller.
- 6.20 All student support services were being run online including counselling support.
- 6.21 The College had a 24/7 staff assistance line. The staff development team were also focusing training on upskilling staff and providing support to staff and managers.

7. Academic Board Report and Temporary Regulation Changes

Received:

- 7.1 A proposal to recommend the temporary suspension or temporary amendment of four academic regulations and the Academic Board Report (19-396)

Noted:

- 7.2 A number of changes to regulations were required to enable students to graduate in line with quality and standards.
- 7.3 The quality team had reviewed the implications of changes to regulations. More changes would be required in the longer term. The temporary

changes would be in place until the end of the academic year in the first instance.

- 7.4 There was a student petition circulating pursuing a no detriment policy. The College was committed to supporting students so they were able to graduate and would not graduate with a lower grade as a result of the changes to delivery and assessment
- 7.5 A no detriment policy had been discussed with Heads of Department.
- 7.6 The plans and proposals in place would not be fit for purpose for all students, some programmes and students would have to be looked at on a case by case basis.
- 7.7 The College's intention was to support students to get the accreditation and grade that they deserved.
- 7.8 The Students' Union requested to attend all meetings of the Goldsmiths' Leadership Group, citing that the President had previously been invited to attend. It was clarified that the Students' Union President had been invited in his capacity on Council to two meetings, as had staff representatives. The Students' Union would be invited to attend meetings on the same basis.

Resolved:

- 7.9 Council approved the proposed changes.
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8. Evolving Goldsmiths

Received:

- 8.1 An update on the progress of the Evolving Goldsmiths programme, responses and timelines (19-380)

Noted:

- 8.2 Council and SMT had received various letters from colleagues and students regarding the Evolving Goldsmiths programme. The College had 662 academic staff, 97 of which are Professors. The Professors' Letter was signed by 57% of Professors. 58% of Academic Board signed their letter, 10 of which were Heads of Department. The College employed 1490 staff. There were a number of joint union submissions.
- 8.3 Council had intended to hold face to face meetings with staff and students' representatives however these were postponed due to the pandemic.
- 8.4 The COVID-19 pandemic was a national and international emergency which impacted the changes the College would have to make.
- 8.5 Evolving Goldsmiths had not been received in the way that Council and senior managers had intended it to be. Some of the messages circulated by senior managers explaining the reasons for change were not new messages and change had been required for a long time.

- 8.6 Members of SMT had been part of the Goldsmiths' community for a long time and they were disappointed that their intentions had been misinterpreted.
- 8.7 It was reported that the College was pausing formal consultation to enable the impact of COVID-19 to be reviewed.
- 8.8 One of the aims of Evolving Goldsmiths was about fast tracking the existing strategy.
- 8.9 The Voluntary Severance scheme remained open for staff.
- 8.10 Staff and students had protested outside Deptford Town Hall. It was reported that these experiences were deeply demoralising for some professional services colleagues. There was not a space for any supportive voices. Although Professional Services Staff were worried about cuts they were supportive of change and modernisation.
- 8.11 Administrative staff recognised the need to change and deliver a better student experience.
- 8.12 Head of Department for History, Academic Board representative on Council, reported that a letter had been drafted by his department outlining the concerns they had. The department had wanted more information about structural changes and how students would be supported. He agreed the need for change was understood more broadly across the College and there was a section of the community that was unheard.
- 8.13 The elected Academic Representative on Council outlined that they were surprised by the positive feedback outlined. It was not a case of whether change was supported or not but rather how the change had been introduced and what was being proposed. There had never been such an intense response to a proposal before. There was longstanding discontent between management and the College community. SMT were perceived as remote and distance from the staff community. Colleagues were unlikely to consider Voluntary Severance in the current climate. Concerns were raised about the proposed changes to ordinances, colleagues wanted to see precise job descriptions in the ordinances rather than enabling roles to be changed by the Warden.
- 8.14 There was a significantly high number of colleagues who had contributed and signed letters in a short period of time. Whatever the intentions, the plans had been poorly received.
- 8.15 The Students' Union raised concerns about the lack of consultation, in particular with the student community. There were concerns over the removal of departmental autonomy. Students relied on the support in departments and this supported improved retention.
- 8.16 Council recognised and acknowledged the criticism received, the intention had always been to collaborate however this had not been understood and the College needed to learn from this. The community needed to recognise that the status quo was not acceptable and change had to happen.

- 8.17 Council outlined concerns that some of the responses to colleagues and SMT were not professional or appropriate. The reasons behind the need to change were not resonating with colleagues. There was an opportunity to rebuild trust and credibility with the community but the plan and rationale had to be clear.
- 8.18 The changes to ordinances were discussed. All members of Academic Board were asked to provide feedback on the specific changes.
- 8.19 The Statutes outline that Council delegate powers to the Warden including the responsibilities and remit of their senior management team.
- 8.20 Concerns had been raised about whether the changes to SMT amounted to a major change in the academic profile. The Chair outlined that currently the Pro-Wardens were each doing two jobs, a head of school and a pro-warden for a strategic area. The proposed changes to SMT re-distributed the responsibilities.
- 8.21 At the Away Day, Council had only approved to launch the Voluntary Severance Scheme and support the direction of travel which included consultation with the community. It was noted in the Council paper that SMT had expected disquiet about the route for the proposals and there would be a need to consult on all aspects going forward.
- 8.22 Everyone at Council had agreed the need to change. The College needed to look at reviewing the strategic plan for 2021-22. As a result of the COVID situation, the College's position had changed. First the College needed to stabilise itself.
- 8.23 Moving forwards, any changes would be consulted upon across the College however the pace of change needed to be emphasised. The community needed to feel trust in the plan and believe in its credibility.
- 8.24 It was reported that the community was not resistant to change and it was understood that the College faced unprecedented circumstances. Goldsmiths' had always been proud of its unique and distinct reputation; this came with a strong sense of ownership of decision making. It was felt that anything that came from management would not be well received.
- 8.25 Senior Management intended to meet with stakeholder groups to outline the severity of the situation.
- 8.26 It was reported that the College were committed to working together. It was clear that when colleagues were utilising the words collegiate, democracy and togetherness they had different meanings and interpretations.
- 8.27 It was important that collective responsibility meant addressing the blame culture.
- 8.28 Council wanted to take the opportunity to genuinely work together and value all voices equally. This would include open meetings with Council.
- 8.29 The College was in a different position from when Evolving Goldsmiths was proposed, the College needed to address survival before moving forwards.

- 8.30 Council needed to listen to the community and learn from how Evolving Goldsmiths was received.
 - 8.31 Council agreed the College needed to move on from the current situation with openness and trust.
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9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report and Gender Pay Gap Report

Received:

- 9.1 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report and note Gender Pay Gap Report (19-383)

Noted:

- 9.2 This report needed to be published to meet the College's regulatory requirements.
- 9.3 It was agreed that the report needed additional scrutiny and review at a future Council meeting.

Action:

- 9.4 Include Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report on the Summer Council agenda.
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10. Financial Regulations

Received:

- 10.1 Changes to the financial regulations (19-386)

Noted:

- 10.2 Changes to the financial regulations were proposed to improve process. However, the College's current financial position meant that it was not appropriate to implement the changes at this time.
 - 10.3 The proposed changes would be returned to Council prior to implementation.
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11. Quality and Standards Report

Received:

- 11.1 the Quality and Standards report (19-387)

Noted:

11.2 Council noted the report.

12. Audit and Risk Committee Report

Received:

12.1 Council Committee report (19-390)

Noted:

12.2 Council noted the Audit and Risk Committee Report.

13. Estates and Infrastructure Committee Report

Received:

13.1 Council Committee report (19-391)

Noted:

13.2 Council noted the Estates and Infrastructure Committee Report.

14. External Relations Committee Report

Received:

14.1 Council Committee report (19-392)

Noted:

14.2 Council noted the External Relations Committee Report.

15. Finance and Resources Committee Report

Received:

15.1 Council Committee report (19-393)

Noted:

15.2 Council noted the Finance and Resources Committee Report.

16. Health and Safety Committee Report

Received:

16.1 Council Committee report (19-394)

Noted:

16.2 Council noted the Health and Safety Committee Report.

17. Nominations and Governance Committee Report

Received:

17.1 Council Committee report (19-395)

Noted:

17.2 Council noted the Nominations and Governance Committee Report.

18. Communications from the Office for Students

Received:

18.1 Updates received from the OfS which need to be shared with the governing body

Noted:

18.2 Council noted the Office for Students communications.