

## Confirmed Minutes

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Board of Directors' Meeting</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>31 March 2025</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>1 pm – 3 pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Birkbeck College</b>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Carol Cook – <b>Chair</b>	Non-Executive Director
Melanie Fellowes	Non-Executive Director
Mark Levy	Non-Executive Director
Abdul Pisavadi	Non-Executive Director
John Fairhurst*	Principal and Chief Executive Officer
Shabnam Karim*	Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer
Alena Bakare	Student Representative (Student President)
Lookman Benson	Student Representative
Amadou Jammeh	Staff Representative (Academic Division)
Andreea Turculet	Staff Representative (Professional Services)
Maria Jackson - <b>Secretary</b>	Head of Governance and Company Secretary

In attendance:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Sunmi Ayorinde	Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Joan O'Mahony	Deputy Principal
Luke Paramasivan	Chief Revenue Officer

<b>PRELIMINARY ITEMS</b>	
<b>1.0</b>	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies</b></p> <p>C Cook welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported that J Fairhurst and S Karim had sent their apologies. M Jackson reported that the Board was quorate even with both Executive Directors absent.</p> <p>Given that L Benson, A Jammeh, A Turculet and L Paramasivan were attending their first meeting of the Board of Directors, C Cook invited everyone to introduce themselves.</p> <p>C Cook reported that there had been no Open Meeting of the Board in February 2025.</p> <p><b>Declarations of interest</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<p><b>Minutes for approval and Action Tracker/Matters Arising:</b></p>
	<p>2.1 <u>Minutes from the meeting of 25 November 2024</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 25 November 2024 were approved.</p>

	<p><u>2.2 Action Tracker and Matters Arising</u></p> <p>C Cook highlighted the following from the Action Tracker where updates were due:</p> <p>November 2022 Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Action 1 Item 20b – Update:</b> As reported previously, the action (to ensure that consideration is given in advance of the next External Review of our governance arrangements to requesting an assurance of compliance with the OfS Conditions of Registration) will be considered in M Jackson's internal review of our governance arrangements.</li> </ul> <p>July 2024 Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Action 4: Completed.</b> The Deputy Principal reported that sector practice is usually to produce an annual Academic Assurance Report. However, she intends to produce an interim report as well as an annual report. The students who are members of the Academic Committee and those who attend meetings of the Board of Directors will be the only students to receive the reports.</li> </ul> <p>September 2024 Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Action 8 – Completed.</b> J O'Mahony had been tasked with advising Marketing about the proposals within our new APP so that they can advertise any commitments made as provisional at this stage (and in particular advise that the travel bursary might be being replaced for entrants for the October 2025 intake onwards). However, J O'Mahony has advised that the CFO advises marketing on relevant changes to bursaries. Nevertheless, J O'Mahony reported that all relevant information was available from the website.</li> </ul> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<p><b>Chair's Update [including Chair's Action taken since previous meeting]</b></p> <p>C Cook confirmed that she had had no cause to take Chair's Action on any matters since the November 2024 Board meeting.</p>
<b>STRATEGIC BUSINESS</b>	
<b>4.0</b>	<p><b>Principal's Report</b> (For information)</p> <p>The Board received the Principal's Report with C Cook flagging the relevance of some of the pieces for the development of Bloomsbury Institute's Strategic Framework.</p> <p>Board members had no questions to ask or issues to raise.</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<p><b>Strategic Framework</b></p> <p><u>5.1 Summary feedback from Staff Meeting discussions</u></p> <p>The Board received a summary feedback report from the last staff meeting. However, C Cook invited J O'Mahoney to share her own reflections on discussions held at the meeting around our Strategic</p>

	<p>Framework. J O'Mahoney said that the event (which had been extremely well organised) had been superbly attended (around 50 staff members attended). She explained that the meeting began with an update from J Fairhurst and included an interesting and fun session led by L Paramasivan's team. She added that a temperature check was taken (using mentimeter) of staff feeling and the results exceeded the positivity level recorded from the Staff Survey.</p> <p>S Ayorinde commented on an interesting discussion on the Institute's value of "Don't be mean" and ways in which we can demonstrate this value in our day-to-day work.</p> <p>M Jackson explained that when reviewing our current Strategic Goals, staff had been divided into groups and were allocated one particular goal for consideration. As a result, the findings presented in the Summary Feedback document reflect the views of individual groups rather than all staff present at the meeting as a collective. M Jackson added that the intention is to have similar discussions with students in a future Student Staff Consultative Forum.</p> <p>C Cook commented on the real sense she got from the Summary Feedback that Bloomsbury Institute is developing the behaviours and ethos that it wants to demonstrate. C Cook also welcomed the involvement of staff and students in what she felt was clearly a dynamic process.</p> <p>A Pisavadi asked why staff felt the need for a Bloomsbury Institute mascot. M Jackson explained that opinion on the introduction of a mascot had been divided.</p>
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## ACADEMIC QUALITY AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

<b>6.0</b>	<p><b>Student Guild Report</b></p> <p>Alena Bakare presented the Student Guild Report for March 2025 and highlighted the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Guild has hosted a number of events designed to foster inclusion e.g. Halloween on Campus, Winter Wonderland, End of Year Party, Valentine and Anti-Valentine Day.</li> <li>• The Guild continues to focus heavily on the mental health and wellbeing of the student body.</li> <li>• Although the Guild's application to the NUS has been accepted, the student body have yet to vote on whether or not they wish to join. Opinion will be sought prior to the start of the new academic year.</li> <li>• Together with the Student Guild, A Bakare has delivered presentations to the new Pre-sessional Programme students.</li> </ul> <p>A Jammeh took the opportunity to commend A Bakare and the student representatives for their dynamism, commenting on how proactive they always are, working with staff wherever possible to improve the student experience. He said he really welcomed this partnership approach. C Cook welcomed this feedback, commenting on the growth of the Student Guild and its representatives and the pivotal role they have to play at Bloomsbury Institute.</p> <p>C Cook asked how the Guild manages its social media engagement to avoid the adverse impact social media can sometimes have. A Bakare explained that she was responsible for the Guild's social media accounts and maintains a schedule of events that includes interviews with Bloomsbury Institute staff. She said that she has also worked closely with the Head of Learning Enhancement on a series of "How To" videos. She also reported on a campaign that involved posting pictures of different countries to showcase the various cultures that are represented at Bloomsbury Institute.</p> <p>C Cook asked how the Guild avoided being tagged to inappropriate content on social media and L Paramasivam asked how the Guild's social media accounts are linked to those of Bloomsbury Institute. A Bakare explained that the two are very much distinct as the Guild is a separate legal entity. She added that the Guild is planning a rebrand which would extend to its website presence.</p>
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	<p>C Cook commented on how the Student Guild can add enormous value to Bloomsbury Institute's marketing efforts by evidencing the role the Guild plays in the life of the Bloomsbury Institute student. L Paramasivam agreed, commenting on the extremely positive social media metrics included in the Guild Report. He said that they significantly outshone those of Bloomsbury Institute and suggested meeting with A Bakare to discuss how the Guild and Bloomsbury Institute could benefit one another in this space. A Bakare said she would be happy to meet but she stressed that the content of their respective social media accounts is very different.</p> <p>J O'Mahony suggested that L Paramasivam share with A Bakare Bloomsbury Institute's Social Media Communications Policy. However, M Jackson pointed out that the Guild has its own such policy.</p> <p>J O'Mahony thanked A Bakare and the Guild for their contributions to Welcome Week for the new Pre-sessional students.</p>
<b>7.0</b>	<p><b>Academic Committee</b></p> <p>7.1 <u>Academic Committee Minutes September 2024</u></p> <p>7.2 <u>Academic Committee Report November 2024</u></p> <p>The Board received the minutes of the September 2024 Academic Committee meeting and the November 2024 Academic Committee Report. It had no questions to ask or issues to raise.</p>
<b>8.0</b>	<p><b>Academic Reporting</b></p> <p>8.1 <u>Academic Performance and Assurance report: advice on timeline and content</u></p> <p>J O'Mahony said that having now received the Internal Audit report on Governance which had focused on academic governance, she would be submitting one Academic Report covering both performance and assurance at two points during the year – one an interim report (June) and the other a final report (September). She added that each report would be considered by the Academic Committee prior to submission to the Board so that the Academic Committee can advise on any changes it might feel are necessary. Additionally, any discussion points could then be incorporated within the report before it is shared with the Board given recommendations made by Internal Audit on the importance of the report capturing the voice of the Academic Committee.</p> <p>C Cook thanked J O'Mahony for her proposed approach to academic reporting going forward.</p>
<b>9.0</b>	<p><b>Student Recruitment and Admissions Update</b></p> <p>In J Fairhurst's absence, M Jackson reported on the Pre-sessional numbers for April 2025 which she had taken from the KPI update report, namely 198 CAS issued. S Ayorinde reported that from this figure 197 students had accepted their offers with J O'Mahony commenting on the high quality of the students joining the programme.</p> <p>M Levy asked how common it was for providers to offer a Pre-sessional programme and whether they charged for the course. J O'Mahony said that the course was hugely beneficial to Bloomsbury Institute as it offered us the opportunity to make maximum use of our CAS allocation. She also reported that we were able to run it with very little additional costs thanks to the good will of staff. L Paramasivam said that the Pre-sessional programme was a good selling point for us, giving our students the opportunity to get up to speed for the start of their degree courses. J O'Mahony added that it gives us a competitive edge. A Jammeh also spoke positively of the programme.</p>

	<p>M Jackson explained that initially within the sector international students had tended to prefer to take the IELTS exam rather than register for a Pre-sessional course to evidence their English language ability given that the IELTS exam was cheaper and far less time-consuming. However, over time international students have come to realise that the Pre-sessional course offers more than just an opportunity to meet entry English language entry requirements as it also provides students with the study skills they will need once they start their degree courses.</p> <p>M Fellowes asked whether J O'Mahony would be tracking the performance of Pre-sessional students to compare it with the performance of students who do not take the Pre-sessional programme. J O'Mahony reported that she would as this would provide one means of evaluating the programme.</p> <p>C Cook returned to the comment J O'Mahony had made about being able to offer the programme at relatively little extra cost to the Institute, and highlighted the need to consider staff resources if the programme were to expand as there were risks involved in relying too heavily on the good will of staff. J O'Mahony agreed, reporting that she had not recruited any academics since 2023, but was now looking to correct that.</p> <p>A Bakare reported that she (and L Benson) had joined Bloomsbury Institute on its Foundation Year and had learnt so much during that initial Foundation Year. As a result, she said that she felt that students would benefit greatly from the Pre-sessional programme. J O'Mahony added that two of our former Foundation Year tutors are now leading on the Pre-sessional programme – D Leonard and S Lesnewskie.</p> <p>C Cook asked whether L Paramasivam had anything to report on domestic student recruitment. L Paramasivam explained that he had recently met with J Fairhurst, S Karim and J O'Mahony to share a few initiatives he wanted to recommend and a few areas that he wanted to review. He reported that he had also conducted a review of our website and had found that we are losing a lot of traffic after that initial hit because we do not have a conversion process. In addition, he said that we were not making enough use of our social media sites. As for long-term initiatives to consider, L Paramasivam said he would be focusing on our programme offering, mode of delivery, and timetabling.</p> <p>C Cook said it was encouraging to hear that there are initiatives that we can adopt to boost student numbers, and said that in due course the Board would welcome consideration of L Paramasivam's domestic student recruitment strategy.</p> <p>L Paramasivam said that given how relatively new the Bloomsbury brand is, we have a good volume of UCAS applications – around 250 as at that morning.</p> <p>In terms of our marketing stance, M Levy asked where we stood on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being passive and 10 aggressive. L Paramasivam said that we were at a 4. J O'Mahony said that it was hard to put a number on our approach, adding that whilst our website might attract a score of 4, other areas would not. She said that for all other activities, a score of 10 was a far more accurate reflection.</p> <p>C Cook said that it was important for us to convert as many leads and applicants as possible particularly given the very crowded and competitive market in which we are operating. She stressed therefore the importance of us exploiting such strong selling points as our size, values, and Student Guild.</p> <p>L Paramasivam said that he had met with some amazing students at Bloomsbury Institute and stressed the importance of us identifying and articulating who our "customer" is.</p> <p>A Jammeh reported that he was working with his fellow Course Leader and Head of School to review the content of Bloomsbury Institute's website and recommended that L Paramasivam draw on the vast internal expertise we have when reviewing our website and our brand. He therefore suggested that L Paramasivam reach out to all colleagues within the Academic Division. J O'Mahony reported that L Paramasivam had already met with all Heads of Schools and that they had discussed having a blue-sky thinking session on possible marketing initiatives.</p>
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## AUDIT AND RISK

### 10.0 Prevent Risk Assessment

10.1 Prevent Risk Assessment January 2025 Cover Paper

10.2 Prevent Risk Assessment January 2025

10.3 Prevent Risk Assessment March 2025 Cover Paper

10.4 Prevent Risk Assessment March 2025

M Jackson presented the January and March 2025 Prevent Risk Assessments as recommended for approval by the SMT, explaining that no amendments had been made to risk ratings. The amendments made were textual updates only.

C Cook commented on the news at the weekend that Michael Stewart, the Head of the Prevent programme had announced that he was standing down. **[Redacted]**

### 11.0 Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25 KPIs

J O'Mahony said that the Access and Participation Committee would be agreeing KPIs for the new APP at its next meeting, adding that the OfS would be releasing its updated data set in July 2025.

## FINANCIAL AND CORPORATE

12.0 To Note: There were no financial reports for this meeting.

## NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

### 13.0 Governance Report – March 2025

M Jackson presented the March 2025 Governance Report.

M Fellowes noted the discussions the Head of Governance and Company Secretary had been involved in with fellow IHE members and asked what Bloomsbury Institute was doing in relation to a mental health strategy. M Jackson explained that the Director of SEWS and the Disability and Wellbeing Manager are developing a Mental Health Strategy in response to a recommendation made by the Internal Audit team.

## COMPLIANCE AND REGULATION

### 14.0 Access and Participation [For consideration]

14.1 APP Update Report

J O'Mahony explained that we remain committed to our original Access and Participation Plan and plan to report fully on the same before the new AY begins.

15.0	<p><b>Access and Participation Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29</b> [For information]</p> <p>15.1 <u>Access and Participation Plan</u></p> <p>15.2 <u>Access and Participation Plan Summary</u></p> <p>J O'Mahony reminded the Board that the OfS had approved our new Access and Participation Plan (due for implementation from 2025-26) in December 2024. She explained that now that the Plan has been approved, she has produced a summary plan for publication alongside the full plan on our website.</p> <p>J O'Mahony reminded the Board that she has deliberately focused on a relatively small number of strategic measures in order to maximise the success of their implementation.</p> <p>J O'Mahony reported on a meeting she had had with John Blake a few weeks previously along with representatives from some other providers. She said that they had had a really useful discussion on the evaluation of strategic measures and publication of evaluation reports and John Blake had made it clear that he was not expecting reports to be published in journals necessarily. It will be sufficient for them to be published on a provider's website.</p>
16.0	<p><b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Report</b> [For consideration]</p> <p>The Board received the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Report and had no comments to make.</p>
17.0	<p><b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023-24</b> [To note – to evidence Bloomsbury Institute's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion]</p> <p>17.1 <u>EDI Annual Report 2023-24 Cover Paper</u></p> <p>17.2 <u>EDI Annual Report 2023-24</u></p> <p>C Cook thanked M Jackson for her detailed Annual Report and asked what happens to it next. M Jackson explained that its journey stops with the SMT and Academic Committee unless there are any actions that either committee wants to recommend she take on board or any initiatives that members of these committees might be prompted to develop. She added that she had always wanted to publish a version of the report on our website but that following changes to the focus and nature of our website, she had been advised that this would not be possible. She also reminded the Board of previous discussions within the Board about the possible development of an EDI Strategy and the Board's advice that rather than develop a standalone EDI strategy, this be built within our corporate Strategic Framework.</p>
<b>POLICY AND DOCUMENT APPROVAL</b>	
18.0	<p><b>Value for Money</b></p> <p>18.1 <u>Value for Money Annual Report 2023-24</u></p> <p>18.2 <u>Value for Money Statement 2023-24</u></p> <p>S Ayorinde presented the Value for Money Annual Report 2023-24 and the accompanying Value for Money Statement 2023-24 and highlighted the following key points:</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Again we have attracted very positive scores in the NSS although our eligible student cohort was smaller this year than the previous year.</li> <li>• The OfS have highlighted some areas of good practice in our TEF outcome report.</li> <li>• <b>[Redacted]</b></li> <li>• Feedback from Bloomsbury Institute students has been included in Section 8.1 of the Annual Report in response to a recommendation made by the Audit and Risk Committee last year.</li> <li>• Potential areas where we could increase our value for money offering have been included in Section 9.</li> <li>• In response to a request from the Board last year, some of the expenditure figures have been broken down.</li> </ul> <p>C Cook sought clarification as to whether the graph on page 4 of the Annual Value for Money Report represented sector results or results for Bloomsbury Institute. S Ayorinde explained that the data related to the sector adding that it was on a downward trajectory following Covid. C Cook asked where Bloomsbury Institute would appear on the graph if its data were to be plotted. S Ayorinde explained that it would be on an upward trajectory. C Cook recommended that Bloomsbury Institute's data be plotted on the graph once the number of eligible students increases. S Ayorinde agreed to do so.</p> <p>M Levy asked how many students had been eligible to participate in the NSS and how many had then participated. S Ayorinde explained that 45 final year undergraduate students had been eligible to participate and all had done so. However, only the results of the Business Management students have been published because numbers for Law and Accounting were below the threshold for publication.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> the Value for Money Annual Report 2023-24 and the Value for Money Statement for 2023-24.</p>
<b>19.0</b>	<p><b>Student Protection Plan</b></p> <p>S Ayorinde presented the Student Protection Plan on behalf of S Karim explaining that it had been recommended for approval by the SMT.</p> <p>C Cook asked if a version with track changes could be submitted to the next Board meeting for approval.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>S Karim to submit a track changes version of the Student Protection Plan to the June 2025 Board of Directors' meeting for approval.</b></li> </ul>
<b>OTHER BUSINESS</b>	
<b>20.0</b>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>C Cook said that A Pisavadi had asked that she raise with the Board the recent Sunday Times article on fraudulent claims being made for student loans by "students" enrolling on degree course with no intention of either following a course or repaying their loan. She explained that the majority of the fraudulent claims are being made by students enrolled at franchised providers.</p>
<b>DATE/TIME OF NEXT MEETING</b>	
<b>Date: 2 June 2025, 1 pm to 3 pm, Venue TBC</b>	