

**GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE**  
**University of London**

**COUNCIL**

**JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (JCC)**

**Minutes of the special meeting held on Wednesday 8 July 2008**

**Present:**

Mr Hugh Jones (Chair), Dr Philip Broadhead (Pro Warden, Students and Learning Development) , Professor Simon McVeigh (Pro Warden Research and Enterprise) Mr Chris Pearson (Director of Human Resources), Ms Charlotte Dunn (UNISON representative, Nursery), Dr Ben Levitas (UCU), Ms Suzanne Stead (UNISON), Mr Paul Stocks (UCU representative, Language Studies Centre)

**In attendance:**

Ms Alison Ahern (Head of Student Support Service), Mr Barry Douglas (Director of Finance), Ms Hannah Bullivant (President, Students Union), Ms Johanna May (Secretary) Ms Melanie Rimmer (Planning Officer), Ms Jess Tratt (President Elect, Students Union)

The Chair welcomed those in attendance and the substitute union members attending this special meeting.

**1. NURSERY**

The Pro Warden, (Students and Learning Development) referred to the paper that had been circulated with the agenda. In summary, the former Review of Childcare had concluded it was necessary to extend the Nursery provision - which was now only for 23 places, giving rise to long waiting lists. The College had originally been optimistic it would be able to enlarge the provision with a purpose built Nursery but this had proved more expensive than first thought. Current estimates were that it would cost in the order of £400-£500K. There was also a need for a critical mass for the Nursery to be economically viable - around 50-60 places.

The high costs meant either that fees would have to be set at a higher rate or there would have to be a large ongoing subsidy.

The tendering exercise was meant to investigate the possibility of there being high quality nursery providers, very local to the College, that would have a good provision at affordable prices. In such a transfer staff would be subject to the TUPE provisions. There was a possibility of completing this exercise quickly which would offer more places as from the next academic year. The tendering exercise was important to see if provision was available.

The UNISON representative requested sight of the original College estimate of the costs of the new Nursery and the quotes received to see where the large discrepancy between the two had occurred.

The Head of Student Support Services explained that the original figures had been based on the costs of a simple portacabin type structure but no allowance had been made for groundworks or the modular building that would be necessary. Two companies had provided preparatory quotes. The relevant figures could be supplied to UNISON.

The UNISON representative then asked about the College subsidy to the Nursery of £80K and pointed out that agency staff fees had been £80K in the previous year and that it would have been possible to make savings here.

The Head of Student Support Services indicated it had not been possible to recruit permanent staff until the future of the Nursery had been determined and that the £80K subsidy had been on top of agency staff costs. Again she undertook to supply the relevant figures to UNISON.

The UNISON representative asked if the new proposed Nursery site had been identified in the College Estates Plan - the Registrar and Secretary indicated that this overall plan had not yet been drawn up - only the building condition survey had been completed.

The UNISON representative voiced some doubt that any Nursery provider would be likely to have 30 places spare from the beginning of the academic year - the Pro Warden, Students and Learning Development indicated at least one provider could tender on those terms.

The UNISON representative asked about past fundraising exercises for the Nursery - it was noted that cake sales during former Gala days were not considered to be appropriate for Open Days, and in any case the funds raised by such means were for special events/treats for the children rather than to fund the core Nursery provision.

UNISON then asked about sponsorship and the Registrar and Secretary indicated he had discussed this matter with the Interim Director of Development and while one London College had obtained funding from a charitable body to support their Nursery, this was not the sort of provision that attracted donors of the sort that funded universities.

The UNISON representative confirmed that UNISON would campaign vigorously to oppose the privatisation of the Nursery but would like to be involved in the choice of bidder. This position was endorsed by the UCU representative.

The Head of Student Support Services indicated that the College would be open to suggestions from all parties as to the criteria to be included in the Tender although it was pointed out that the process would be led by management.

The Director of Human Resources also confirmed that, under the terms of a TUPE transfer, the terms and conditions of current staff would be protected on transfer to the new provider. No changes could be made to the conditions of transferred staff as a result of the transfer - there had to be a valid economic reason for making them. The

due diligence process to be carried out in relation to any TUPE transfer would mean that the College would want assurances about the new providers ability to fund the staff's current terms and conditions and a broadly similar pension scheme.

The Pro Warden (Students and Learning Development) indicated the College was aware that the Local Authority Nursery at Amersham Road had recently been extensively renovated and was now to be re-opened incrementally.

UNISON suggested that an alternative to a TUPE transfer would be to second the current staff to the new provider so they maintained their employment rights.

The Director of HR indicated this was not an entirely satisfactory way to run a business and the Director of Finance confirmed that the charge back facilities could be complicated and expensive.

The Students Union (SU) representative commented that the SU were against outsourcing but were campaigning for better and bigger resources and would like to see more information about the College's proposals. The Head of Student Support Services undertook to pass all relevant information to the Students Union.

It was indicated that it was hoped to have more places available by September.

The UNISON representative from the Nursery made the point that the current OFSTED rating for the Nursery was borderline outstanding and that ideally any future provision should be at least good. The Head of Student Services said that any provision would need to be satisfactory at least, since below that level would be unacceptable.

It was pointed out by the Students Union representative that there was no mention of DDA compliance in the tender documentation. The Director of Finance confirmed that environmental compliance would be added as part of the tender.

It was noted that the current provision was finite – if an alternative provider was found there was the possibility of more places being offered. The desirability of there being an option of providing more places would be put in the tender.

The Registrar and Secretary noted that at this stage the College was sharing information and documentation with all interested parties. The unions would be kept informed about the tendering process and were invited to submit comments on the tender criteria to the Head of Student Support as soon as possible.

## **2. INTO**

The Registrar and Secretary noted that he had advised the unions at the last meeting of the JCC that the College was looking at pursuing this initiative.

To recap - the College needed to improve its financial sustainability in a way that did not depart from the College's core values. A number of HEI institutions (e.g. Newcastle, Exeter, UEA) had already formed agreements with INTO. INTO had initially approached the College and the College was now undertaking an exercise to see if this was an initiative worth pursuing – currently this was an open question.

INTO would provide the building and the facilities to support teaching for overseas students. There would be the provision of a foundation education. The marketing of the courses would be undertaken in partnership with the College. The current discussion was commercially confidential but was exploring if the INTO model, subject mix, expectations etc. would suit the College's needs or not. If it was decided to proceed, there would be formal approval via the appropriate committees – Academic Board, Council etc.

It was noted that INTO had different models of joint business with various HEI's e.g. at Exeter the service was outsourced, and at UEA it was a joint venture, but so far no proposals about a possible model for GSC had been made – it would be July/August before such a document would be drawn up. If this then looked like a likely proposition, it would be considered further by the relevant College committees.

The UCU representative from the Language Studies Centre indicated that Exeter had been bankrupt and INTO had driven a hard bargain with them.

The Registrar and Secretary indicated he wanted to talk to his opposite numbers in Exeter (as the Director of HR was doing). The critical thing would be to determine if the business model was right or not for GSC - there were fundamental questions to ask and be answered.

The UCU president indicated UCU were against this initiative and unanimous local meetings had urged the College to reject this approach - the closer people looked into this matter, the stronger the feeling that this was inappropriate. There were grave implications for staff re: the quality of staff INTO employed/their morale, work experience, career expectations and salary expectations. This move would be disastrous for the Goldsmiths brand, which was cutting edge.

The Registrar and Secretary indicated he was going through the process of discussion and analysis and there would be adequate time for consultation. Consultation would take place in the Autumn term of 2008-09 at the earliest – no decisions would be made over the summer.

The Pro Warden (Research and Enterprise) indicated that he had met INTO representatives to talk about academic matters and it was clear - although these were early days – that there was a lot to talk about with departments etc. about the business plan and the extent the provision of foundation years, whether the service was going to be a stand alone one or specifically tailored into existing/future programmes.

The Registrar and Secretary indicated that when the College had made a decision on the business plan – either to end consideration of it or to take it forward, there would need to be consideration of the forms of the joint venture agreement. The College would be looking to benefit from the marketing opportunities offered by INTO, not to change the College brand.

The UCU representative indicated that while they were sure that the Registrar and Secretary had the best interests of the College at heart, they needed to be assured that there would be open, transparent and realistic consultation about any proposals and needed more concrete reassurance about the length of the consultation period.

The Registrar and Secretary indicated that at this stage he did not know the timescale for consultation but if and when the College was in a position to move forward on this initiative, a special meeting of the JCC could be convened to discuss the timescale. There would be a significant period of consultation with possibly open meeting for all staff.

The Registrar and Secretary commented that the College was going to have to learn how to attract international students to departments who currently only had one or two such students. Hence it could learn from this exercise, even if the final decision was not to proceed. He indicated he had looked at the INTO operation at Newcastle University where a range of foundation programmes was offered going onto various degrees. There would be no guaranteed progression to a degree at Goldsmiths but a guarantee to progress to a degree at a UK university. The transition to a degree at the College would be according to normal admission criteria. At UEA, which had started the programme in 2004-05, the first cohort of students were in their second undergraduate year. Sixty to seventy per cent of the first cohort had gone on to courses at UEA, the rest were at other UK universities. Once students had spent a year at a university they wanted to stay on there.

An initiative such as this could feed all courses including those in departments that currently had very few overseas students. It was noted it would be important not to unbalance those courses in departments (such as Art and Media and Communications) that had no difficulty in recruiting overseas students.

The UCU representative from the Language Study Centre (LSC) pointed out that courses offered by the Centre prepared students to very high standards. Goldsmiths courses were cognitively much more difficult and more extensive than those offered by other HEIs. INTO staff less well qualified and experienced than the LSC and it was important academic standards were not compromised.

The Registrar and Secretary agreed that it was important that Goldsmiths standards should not be lost in any deal and indicated that he believed that the marketing functions at Goldsmiths would work well with the INTO function – and the College could learn a lot from them.

The UCU representative asked if the transfer of land and buildings would involve building on the St. James site. The Registrar and Secretary indicated this would be convenient because it conjoined the Halls of Residence but ultimately it would be how INTO could fit into the Estates “Masterplan” exercise that would determine the location of the operation. He confirmed the INTO plan would involve some kind of asset transfer as it was a property development company.

The UCU representative asked if UCU would be able to sit in as observers to the discussion between INTO and the College. The Registrar and Secretary indicated the current meetings were with individuals and that to sit in on these would involve UCU signing a confidentiality agreement which would not be practicable. He confirmed he was trying to be open and work with the unions but it was not helpful that some of the UCU briefings on this matter had taken words out of context. This had potentially limited the scope for open discussions. He indicated he would be happy to have a meeting with the UCU. The UCU representative said he would take this proposal away.