

	PAPER NO: EC.10(12)	
Board/Committee:	Educational Character Committee	
Date:	10 December 2012	
Paper title:	Educational Character Statement	
Author:	Dr Phil Cardew, Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic)	
Executive sponsor:	Dr Phil Cardew, Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic)	
Recommendation by the Executive:	To recommend the Statement to the Board of Governors	
Aspect of the Corporate Plan to which this will help deliver?	All	
Matter previously considered by:	Academic Board	On: 7 November 2012
Further approval required?	Board	On: 21 March 2013
Communications – who should be made aware of the decision?	Board of Governors, University Staff	

Executive summary

The Educational Character Statement was commissioned by the Educational Character Committee to provide more depth of understanding for governors (and members of the Committee, in particular) with regard to the educational character of the University.

Following prior discussion, it seeks to make a number of clear statements about the educational character of the University, providing a brief discussion of each by way of context.

The Statement is intended as an *aide memoire* for governors in discussing, or representing, the educational character (and in reaching decisions regarding, or entertaining discussion of, academic-related matters pertaining to the Board and its committees). It is not intended to be encyclopaedic in nature, rather, to encapsulate aspects of the University's character, specifically related to its vision and mission, as well as its historical perspective with regard to core provision and widening participation.

The committee is requested to recommend the statement to the Board.

Educational Character Statement

VISION

“To be the most admired university in the UK for creating professional opportunity, and thus a source of pride for our students, our staff and the communities we serve.”

MISSION

We are about creating opportunity for our students and equipping them to become highly successful in their chosen field. Our focus is on the professions. Widening participation is achieved by delivering success for our students. We can help create the best possible opportunities for our students to succeed.

“Creating professional opportunity for all who can benefit.”

EDUCATIONAL CHARACTER

WE RESPECT OUR FOUNDATION AND HISTORIC MISSION

From its foundation, as the Borough Polytechnic, in 1892, London South Bank University has played an important role in the development of technical, professional and business education for a wide demographic group, irrespective of social background, age, ethnicity or gender.

This historic mission – the essence of which is captured within our vision and mission statements – underpins all our activities and provides a context for our operation within an increasingly diverse higher education sector.

We celebrate our historic character, and the part we have played within the higher education sector over the past 120 years.

WE WILL MAINTAIN A COURSE PORTFOLIO WHICH SUPPORTS THE NEEDS BOTH OF OUR STUDENTS AND OF OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

We are a University, and, as such, seek to maintain a course portfolio which supports learning across a diverse range of subjects and at all levels (and modes of delivery).

Our emphasis is, and always has been, on the practical and applied disciplines, supporting ‘real world’ learning and targeted on meeting the employment needs both of our students, and our communities. Our target is to enhance our students’ abilities within their chosen career, as well as their academic status and potential.

Our central concern is the employability of our students, and we will continue to maintain a level of professional accreditation that is consistent with this focus. At the same time, we will engage with leading employers within each of our employment sectors and ensure that students, whatever their course (or level of accreditation) are alive to the challenges of gaining fruitful employment commensurate with their level of achievement.

WE WILL UNDERPIN OUR ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO WITH RELEVANT AND APPLIED
RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE ACTIVITY

Our students wish to be taught by active and engaged academics, who are expert in their scholarly fields and who maintain an active engagement with their disciplines.

However, we are not a research-led university and do not, within our current context, wish to become one. Our engagement with research, enterprise and scholarly activity is in support of our teaching activity and provides an important context for the delivery of our course portfolio.

Research and enterprise are important to the University, in taking forward our engagement with the academic and professional environments within which we operate and in supporting the delivery of the best-possible courses to our students (particularly at the higher levels of the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*). Our students, whatever their discipline, should have the opportunity of being taught by staff who are active in their field, and of, themselves, participating in research and enterprise as their own expertise develops.

WE WILL MAINTAIN A FOCUS FOR OUR ACTIVITIES WHICH ENHANCES LOCAL
IMPACT WITHIN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

London is a global city, and our students come to us from such a variety of backgrounds as to give a multi-cultural context to everything that we do. We have no dominant ethnic, cultural or religious communities on campus. Our local environment is, by its very nature, an international environment.

Similarly, our diverse internal community provides a supportive environment for students across the world, and our ambition is to continue to engage with, recruit, and support students from a variety of nations, both through collaborative institutional partnerships and by individual recruitment.

Thus, whilst we maintain a commitment (and a focus) on our location as a 'community university' we are also conscious of the need to ensure that we engage internationally and provide our students with an opportunity to locate their studies within a global context. We will encourage course teams to provide such an opportunity, at all levels of study, as well as (where appropriate) engaging in opportunities for study abroad, international exchange and the reception of a diverse range of external speakers into the University.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS WHO ARE CAPABLE OF
ACHIEVEMENT

We are a University with a history of successful delivery to a wide range of students, from many different backgrounds, many of whom are the first in their families to enter higher education.

However, we are committed to the maintenance of academic standards and the development of the excellence of our students; whilst we retain a charitable ethos, our focus must be on those students who are able to fully benefit from the opportunities that higher education brings them. We are fully committed to fair access, but this does not mean that we can have no standards of entry.

We also respect the fact that past performance is only one measure of future potential. Whilst we will continue to set standard entry tariffs for a wide number of our students, we will also continue to explore alternative measures of this potential and to admit students who demonstrate this potential (and who we believe have the ability to succeed).

Once we have admitted a student, our focus will be on supporting them to the end of their course and in ensuring that we have in place mechanisms to identify risks to progression and achievement (and to act when those risks are identified). Our ambition is that every student we admit achieves a good degree within an appropriate time period.

WE WILL ENSURE OUR STAFF ARE ABLE TO SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT

Our students are the markers of our success; our staff are the means by which that success is delivered.

Both academic and support staff are key to the educational experience of students, whether that is through direct teaching and learning activity or through their day-to-day contact with student services, learning resources, IT systems, administration, estates and facilities.

Our staff must be excellently qualified, motivated and prepared to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and fast-moving environment. We will ensure that we provide appropriate opportunities to support their personal development and that our appraisal systems acknowledge excellence as well as identifying need.

WE WILL ENSURE WE ARE ABLE TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF DELIVERY WITHIN AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

We operate within an uncertain and flexible environment, which presents new challenges to our academic delivery each year, and which requires us to be responsive and alive to those challenges.

We are committed to the excellence of the standards of our awards and to ensuring that we more than meet the expectations of external accrediting agencies and government departments. At the same time, we are aware of the need to act swiftly to meet emerging agendas, and to ensure that our systems are appropriate to their ends and not 'gold plated'.

To this end, we are committed to an environment of consistent review and reflection, enabling us to capture, and promulgate, the best practices of our course teams, whilst maintaining a self-critical view of all that we do.

Students are at the heart of our academic delivery, and we will continue to capture, and respond to, their opinion and to engage them in the review of their learning experiences.

We will respond to both our internal and external markets and ensure that we can continue to maintain a vibrant, diverse, and high-quality academic portfolio which will enable us to flourish.