

# The Bloomsbury Colleges

University of London

# Report

Delivering support  
and success through  
collaboration



Leading education  
and social research  
Institute of Education  
University of London



Royal Veterinary College  
University of London



The School of Pharmacy  
University of London

# Chair's introduction

Collaboration across Higher Education is being encouraged by Government and by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Four years ago a grant from HEFCE led to a management report which examined the benefits which could flow from greater cooperation across the six Higher Education institutions in Bloomsbury. These are Birkbeck, the Institute of Education, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Royal Veterinary College, the School of Oriental and African Studies and The School of Pharmacy. These are medium-sized autonomous colleges of the University of London, each with an international reputation for research and teaching. The report identified a number of areas where the colleges could work collaboratively to achieve greater value than through independent activity.

Since the establishment in 2004 of The Bloomsbury Colleges (TBC), a consortium of the six colleges, much has been achieved and HEFCE itself has

highlighted how (TBC) provide a good example of how institutions can cooperate on matters of mutual interest while retaining their integrity and independence. This has been across a wide range of academic and administrative activities, which are described in more detail in this report.

Academic collaboration has been a priority and has built on existing bilateral and multilateral links. We aim to broaden and deepen academic collaboration. A major catalyst for this is the newly-established London International Development Centre (LIDC). This Centre draws on the unique range of expertise across the six partners, which was recognised by HEFCE in a major grant of £3.7 million to cover LIDC's set-up costs, including the purchase of its premises in Gordon Square.

Another major success which benefits staff and students across the six colleges is the Bloomsbury Virtual Learning Environment. TBC has also established research studentships tenable at two or more of the partner institutions. Project proposals are put forward which require the successful PhD candidate to be supervised at a lead college with another college providing the second supervisor. The second tranche of these studentships have been awarded for September 2008.

Looking to the future, TBC has begun a feasibility study, funded by HEFCE, to examine the options for a major project on administrative systems convergence and this should bear fruit in 2009.

The Bloomsbury Colleges will continue to explore other opportunities through collaboration to further research and teaching and to improve the services offered to staff and students.



*Paul Webley*

**Professor Paul Webley**  
Chair, The Bloomsbury Colleges

# Who's who in The Bloomsbury Colleges



## Birkbeck

Birkbeck is a multi-disciplinary university with programmes in humanities, sciences and social sciences. It has a wide range of full-time masters and research degrees with 80% of its research rated as internationally important. It is also unique in its portfolio of part-time degrees and other courses. All of its undergraduate degrees are through part-time study creating a mature learning environment where the majority of students have work experience.



## The Royal Veterinary College

UK's first and largest veterinary school. One of the leading veterinary teaching and research centres in Europe; it provides support for veterinary and related professions through its three referral hospitals, diagnostic services and continuing professional development courses.



## The Institute of Education

The only college of the University of London dedicated entirely to teaching, research and consultancy in education and education-related areas of social science and professional practice. Widely recognised as a world leader in educational research, the range and depth of IOE expertise is unique in the UK.



## The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)

The leading centre in Europe for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. It enjoys a worldwide reputation for the quality of its teaching and research in the arts and humanities, languages and cultures, and the law and social sciences.



## The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Britain's national school of public health and a leading postgraduate institution in Europe for public health and tropical medicine. An internationally recognised centre of excellence in public health, global health and tropical medicine, it is one of the highest-rated research institutions in the UK.



## The School of Pharmacy

The only UK institution dedicated entirely to pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences. Internationally top-rated research is integrated with up-to-date teaching to further knowledge and understanding of medicines – how they are made, how they act and how people use them to prevent and cure disease.

## London International Development Centre

### Bloomsbury Colleges unite to create new Centre for International Development

A new and pioneering multi-million pound initiative to share expertise across The Bloomsbury Colleges (TBC) to improve international development research has made an impressive start. Since March 2008 the London International Development Centre (LIDC) has convened six workshops on development issues and won high profile support for its unique interdisciplinary approach. It is a collaboration between the six Bloomsbury Colleges (Birkbeck, Institute of Education, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Royal Veterinary College, School of Oriental and African Studies, and The School of Pharmacy) of the University of

London. LIDC was set up with a £3.7m grant in 2007 from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to establish a collaborative and interdisciplinary centre to address the complex problems of international development. The Secretary of State for International Development, the Right Honourable Douglas Alexander MP, spoke at LIDC's public launch in April this year and HRH The Princess Royal formally opened LIDC's Gordon Square premises in June 2008. LIDC is TBC's flagship intellectual project and it has already attracted 255 members from across the six colleges.

LIDC serves as a catalyst for researchers to pool their work and develop new projects together. Workshops designed to broaden horizons have already taken place and have provided new insights. So far natural and social scientists from The Bloomsbury Colleges have met to discuss HIV/AIDS, anthropology, economics and the difficulties of fighting zoonotic diseases (diseases shared by animals and humans). At a reception during the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in July 2008, LIDC unveiled its plans to audit existing Distance Learning for Development (DL4D) resources at the University of London and to help develop new and innovative DL4D programmes in conjunction with University researchers, international partners and funders.



**HRH The Princess Royal unveiling the commemorative plaque marking the opening of the LIDC**

Photo: Geoff Wilson



**Delegates at the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning with LIDC's Distance Learning for Development (DL4D) Resource Pack**

Day-to-day leadership and the strategic direction of LIDC are provided by Professor Jeff Waage, Director of LIDC, with assistance from the rest of the six-strong core LIDC Team. LIDC's work is overseen by a Management Group chaired by Professor Sir Andy Haines, Director of LSHTM, and the Heads, or their representatives, from the other Bloomsbury Colleges.

### **Broad and Ambitious Aims**

LIDC is building an original programme of development research by bringing together the development-related research and teaching activities of the individual Bloomsbury Colleges. Its focus is interdisciplinary, applying natural and social science to development problems. It will draw upon TBC's development-related postgraduate course modules to create new opportunities for focused, face-to-face and distance training for tomorrow's development professionals, and for capacity building partnerships with universities in developing countries.

LIDC's mission is to tackle the complex problems of international development by:

- Facilitating high quality and relevant interdisciplinary research among staff within the colleges and other partners
- Developing new teaching programmes, particularly focusing on postgraduate and continuing education, and capitalising on the expertise within the colleges in distance and blended learning
- Informing national and international policies on development by generating and synthesising appropriate evidence and working with policymakers to promote linkages between research, policy and practice
- Building capacity in low- and middle-income countries to address the needs of partner higher education and research institutions, NGOs and government departments.

### **Benefits of Interdisciplinary Research**

LIDC members across TBC conduct development-related research, ranging from the impact of globalisation and trade on poor countries to the development of new medicines based on the knowledge of indigenous peoples. Each college has a distinctive capacity in development research which may relate to a particular sector, like health, or a specific discipline, such as law or economics. However, development research today requires a profoundly interdisciplinary approach. Technological breakthroughs, such as advances in crop breeding for food or energy production, may not be applied successfully unless the social and economic aspects of their development for low-income countries are incorporated into the research process from the outset. LIDC is distinctive among development institutions in having such a broad mix of natural and social scientists to address this challenge and it proves that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

LIDC will identify areas of research where an interdisciplinary approach has particular opportunities to address key development

issues. For instance, many of the most serious infectious diseases affecting poorer countries are zoonotic in origin, like avian flu. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) can provide complementary technical expertise to understand these threats, while other colleges can provide a social and economic research dimension to their management. The School of Pharmacy and LSHTM have complementary technical skills in the development and trialling of new medicines for diseases affecting the poor, and with the Institute of Education (IOE) they share complementary capacity to assist the policy, educational and delivery challenges to ensure access to these products by poor communities. Conflict and violence frequently interfere with the development of the poorest countries. Complementary expertise on the political and economic origin of conflicts, their impacts on health, education and livelihoods, and recovery from conflict is widely available from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), IOE, LSHTM and Birkbeck. These colleges have already begun to explore together useful areas of interdisciplinary research. Women's education and health and issues of direct relevance to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be another new focus of development research collaboration between TBC.



**HRH The Princess Royal meeting students awarded The Bloomsbury Colleges' Studentships**

Photo: Geoff Wilson

# London International Development Centre

LIDC research across TBC is also being facilitated by the online Bloomsbury Learning Environment (BLE), which can be accessed by members of all six colleges at [www.ble.ac.uk](http://www.ble.ac.uk). All LIDC members have access to the LIDC pages of the BLE – a space where they can access staff profiles and interests, and information on research seminars, new projects and funding opportunities. This secure site will also host discussion groups for the development of ideas and projects. In addition, LIDC disseminates its research, publicises its events and promotes interdisciplinary research to a wider audience through its eye-catching and comprehensive website, available at [www.lidc.org.uk](http://www.lidc.org.uk).

## Building Capacity, Improving Training and Distance Learning

International training courses in development studies exist at postgraduate diploma and MSc level in several Bloomsbury Colleges. In addition, there are specialist courses in human and animal health, pharmacy and education which are targeted particularly at development issues. Overall, The Bloomsbury Colleges offer 301 modules in the area of international development. LIDC has published a Teaching Study, including a directory of these courses. The report shows synergies between modules and is designed to encourage course coordinators to improve their links, share and enhance ideas and curricula. Therefore, Bloomsbury students may in future be able to access a range of international development modules in different colleges. LIDC will build on the precedent of inter-college courses relevant to development, such as that between LSHTM and the RVC on Veterinary Epidemiology, which attracts students from around the world.

Besides these taught courses, the six colleges deliver a wide range of distance degrees, about 30 in all, covering subjects ranging from sustainable development to educational leadership and management. LIDC recognises that distance learning

holds particular opportunities for engaging universities in low-income countries and helping to build capacity through training partnerships and sharing curricula. Consequently, it will join with partners in the University of London and worldwide to enhance distance learning as a tool for development. LIDC's Distance Learning for Development (DL4D) Initiative will draw upon distance learning and innovative learning technologies, and focus on demands for more integrated and cross-disciplinary learning programmes. One new programme, for instance, will be to establish with the international agricultural research system a set of courses to support a global open university in food and agriculture. LIDC also participated in the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5), held at the IOE in July 2008. As LIDC becomes more established over the coming year, it will begin to build on existing college links with partners in the developing world to forge capacity-strengthening networks with universities and other institutions in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Currently TBC are involved in 182 partnerships, formed around 207 different projects, across 53 countries.

## Influencing Policy and Strengthening Global Citizenship

LIDC's dedication to interdisciplinary research extends beyond TBC. LIDC has potential to bring innovative interdisciplinary thinking to those who make and deliver international development policy in the UK and internationally. Recent trends towards greater collaboration in development activities across government departments and public bodies, between the public and private sectors, and with civil society, will all demand better understanding of interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies, and a new cadre of experts with interdisciplinary skills. LIDC's role will include utilising high quality interdisciplinary research evidence to influence development policy.

LIDC is eager to build, with like-minded organisations, a platform for development issues in London and beyond, encouraging



**The Secretary of State for International Development, the Right Honourable Douglas Alexander MP, speaking at LIDC's launch**



**A young market seller, Sierra Leone**

LIDC promotional photograph

dialogue and debate. LIDC has the advantage of being able to draw upon London's remarkably international community to build greater global citizenship and awareness both in the UK and overseas. It will achieve this by organising high profile development-related events for a diverse group of stakeholders and interested parties, including academics, development practitioners, NGOs and businesses. LIDC academics will also participate in high profile discussions about development to highlight their research findings and the benefits of LIDC's approach. For example, Prof Waage, Director of LIDC, and LIDC members Dr Moses Oketch, Senior Lecturer from IOE, and Prof Machiko Nissanke, from SOAS, all contributed in June 2008 to a prestigious Chatham House launch of the latest African Economic Outlook, produced by the OECD Development Centre, the African Development Bank and the UN's Economic Commission for Africa.

### The Interdisciplinary Hub

While LIDC activities will occur across the campuses of all six colleges, LIDC has a physical presence at 36 Gordon Square, the former home of the Association of Commonwealth Universities. The building houses a core LIDC Team, which will provide support in project and course development to staff in the colleges, and manage LIDC's workshops, events, website and the LIDC pages of the Bloomsbury Learning Environment. More than 50 academics representing a distinctly interdisciplinary community of research groups from IOE, LSHTM, SOAS and Birkbeck are based in the building alongside groups which embrace a broader development community, including the Royal African Society and the George Institute – an international health NGO. All Bloomsbury staff will have access to LIDC's meeting rooms for interdisciplinary development workshops and meetings.

### Professor Jeff Waage, Director of LIDC

Prof Waage is an expert in international agricultural research for development and his career has been split between academia and international work. The former head of the Department of Agriculture and Centre for Environmental Technology at Imperial College, London, he also served as the Chief Executive of the intergovernmental agency CABI Bioscience, which undertakes research for development through collaborative centres in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe.

He has helped set up and run agricultural and environmental initiatives with the UN system, international centres and Conventions, including the Global IPM Facility, the Global Invasive Species Programme and LUBILOSA, an African-based programme which developed alternatives to pesticides for the control of locust plagues. Prof Waage currently works on biological and social aspects of international biosecurity and he has a strong interest in interdisciplinary research and training for development. He joined LIDC as its first Director in 2007.



**Staff from The Bloomsbury Colleges can become members of LIDC. Please contact [admin@lidc.bloomsbury.ac.uk](mailto:admin@lidc.bloomsbury.ac.uk) .**

London International Development Centre, 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PD, UK  
Tel: + 44 (0) 20 7958 8251  
Fax: + 44 (0) 20 3073 8303  
[www.lidc.org.uk](http://www.lidc.org.uk)

## The Bloomsbury Studentships

**The Bloomsbury Colleges have established research studentships to encourage intercollegiate research across the member institutions. These cover tuition and living expenses for three years and are open to students from across the world. A total of ten studentships were available from September 2007 with another twelve in competition for September 2008. The students selected are required to enroll at the college of their lead supervisor and also to work closely with the collaborating supervisor from a second college.**

The first ten awards were varied and the students concerned have commented on their projects.

These are a sample of the projects awarded studentships. Others included key proteins in the dormancy phase of tuberculosis; the development of models of human intestinal epithelium to study how infection by *Campylobacter jejuni* causes diarrhoeal disease; the modification of bacterial surface polysaccharide as a novel therapy for *Streptococcus suis* meningitis and septicaemia in the pig; and the physicochemical characteristic and optimization of a new cost affordable amphotericin B medicine.



**Catherine Moleni has been a Research Fellow at the University of Malawi.** “In learning of The Bloomsbury Studentship, I realized that the project it was attached to – ‘Strengthening open, distance and flexible learning approaches to improve education in high HIV prevalence countries in SADC – concerned issues that were close to my own research interests, namely the impact of HIV and AIDS on education, social inclusion and school dropout. Critically, it was located in Malawi.” Catherine is studying at IOE and LSHTM.



**Working on NGOs and Human Rights Education, Sam Mejias says** “I am working in partnership with several NGOs to evaluate the impact of whole school models of human rights education, and to gauge the relevance of these approaches to the missions and intended outcomes of both development and non-development NGOs. The studentship has thus far given me a deeper understanding of human rights education in both theory and practice.” Sam is studying at IOE and BBK.



**Guillaume Fournié is working on poultry movement networks in Vietnam and their impact on the spread and control of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 infection. He comments:** “Since my supervisors belong to two different colleges, I have access to all the high level courses and lectures at both, moreover, working every day with people having different backgrounds and providing me with another perspective on my work is very rewarding.” Guillaume is studying at RVC and LSHTM.



**Henry Kissinger Ochieng finished his MSc in Belgium before beginning work on the relationship between medication error and patient harm due to adverse drug effects.** “I foresee myself expanding my epidemiological knowledge and research skills to tackle the full complexity of issues that affect large numbers of people.” Henry is studying at LSHTM and SOP.



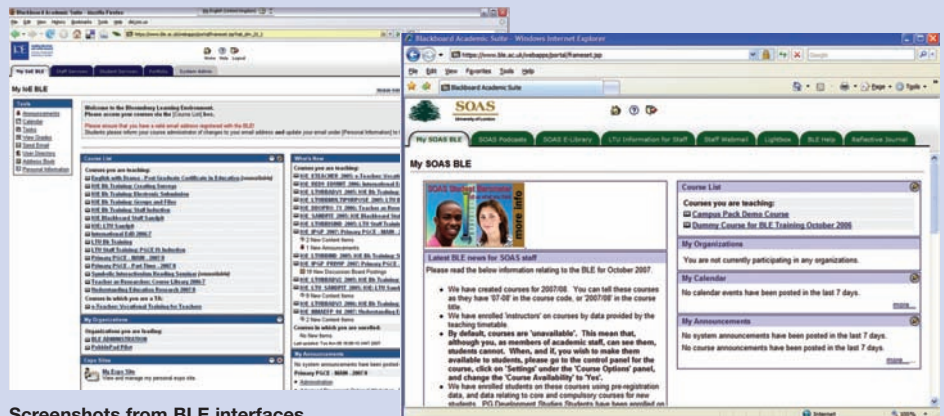
**“I am very grateful to have been given this opportunity, which will give me valuable experience in the fields of both biology and chemistry” says Khadijo Osman, whose studentship enables her to work in two colleges on antibacterial compounds from locusts.**

“The search for new antibiotic compounds originating from natural resources is a promising research area. Insects are the largest (80% of all fauna) and most widespread group within the animal kingdom, and synthesise a variety of antibacterial compounds including defensins and cecropins as part of their innate immune response to infection.” Khadijo is studying at SOP and BBK.

# The Bloomsbury Learning Environment (BLE)

The Bloomsbury Learning Environment (BLE) is a shared learning platform, developed by the Institute of Education, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Royal Veterinary College and the School of Oriental and African Studies, and will be fully used across Birkbeck in 2008-9. It is the first example of a cross-institutional implementation of the Blackboard Academic Suite in the UK.

The BLE is a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which helps support students' learning. Tutors place lecture notes, PowerPoint presentations, podcasts (recorded audio) of lectures and other course-related materials on dedicated course areas, which students can access remotely from anywhere in the world via the Internet. Students are therefore able to access their course materials at times which suit them and are able to make any adjustments they may need (e.g. a visually impaired student can adjust font sizes). Students can also submit electronic copies of their assessments through the platform. The BLE can be used to track students' progress, monitored by both students and their tutors. A variety of tools are available, which provide opportunity for student-led content, both individually and collaboratively authored. These tools include discussion boards, wikis (spaces which can be collaboratively edited) and blogs (online journals). The BLE supports and encourages collaborative and



Screenshots from BLE interfaces

personalised learning, which supports students of all learning styles and abilities.

Each college has its own unique BLE interface, but all benefit from coming under one licence. The joint collaboration, established in 2004, provides many benefits including sharing technical support, pedagogic expertise, cost efficiencies on licence fees and collaborative funding opportunities. The colleges also share costs for remote hosting of Blackboard, freeing up dependency on IT infrastructures and support within the colleges.

A group of senior managers from each of the colleges, who meet on a monthly basis, steer the work of the BLE. The BLE Technical and Pedagogy Groups regularly meet bringing together staff from the colleges to share good practice and work together to ensure the BLE is running to

optimal functionality. A successful E-Learning Academic Showcase was held and attended by over 150 staff from across the six colleges.

To find out more about the BLE, contact Sarah Sherman, BLE Service Manager [s.sherman@bloomsbury.ac.uk](mailto:s.sherman@bloomsbury.ac.uk)

**Appropriate and Practical Technologies for Students, Teachers, Administrators and Researchers**



In January 2008, The Bloomsbury Colleges were awarded £195,000 to manage the APT STAIRS project. The project is investigating new technologies which provide a common space for users (students, teachers, administrators and researchers) with different skills to work online together. This innovative project is focusing on the use of online collaborative tools and aims to encourage uptake and adoption across The Bloomsbury Colleges.

Part of the funding is being distributed across the six colleges to run demonstrator projects, which are using Google Docs and other similar tools, to engage all users in supporting and developing learning, teaching, administration and research.

For further information, please visit the project website at <http://www.bloomsbury.ac.uk/apt>

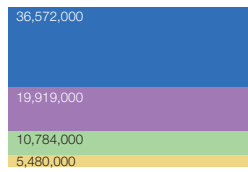


Members of the Bloomsbury Learning Environment team from BBK, IOE, LSHTM, RVC and SOAS

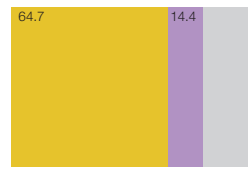
# Financial, Staff and Student Statistics

## Birkbeck

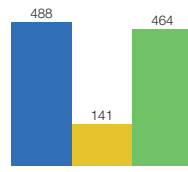
**Income** (Total £72,755,000)



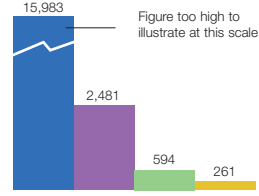
**Staff and administration expenditure** (Total 79.1%)



**Staff nos.** (Total 1,093)

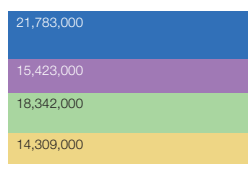


**Student nos.** (Total 19,319)

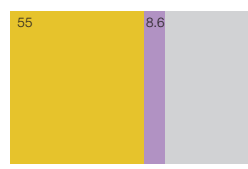


## Institute of Education

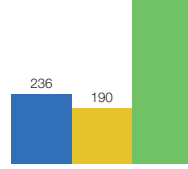
**Income** (Total £69,857,000)



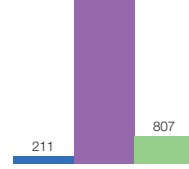
**Staff and administration expenditure** (Total 63.6%)



**Staff nos.** (Total 992)

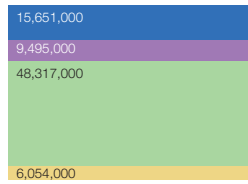


**Student nos.** (Total 5,895)

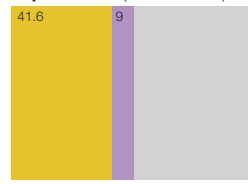


## London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

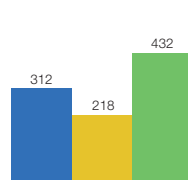
**Income** (Total £79,517,000)



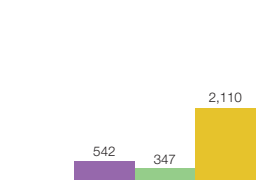
**Staff and administration expenditure** (Total 50.6%)



**Staff nos.** (Total 962)

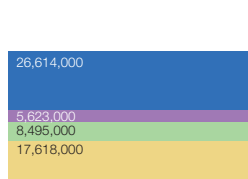


**Student nos.** (Total 2,999)

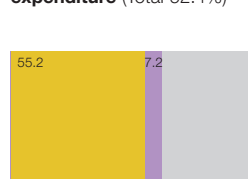


## Royal Veterinary College

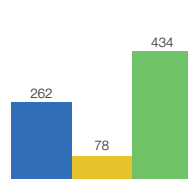
**Income** (Total £58,350,000)



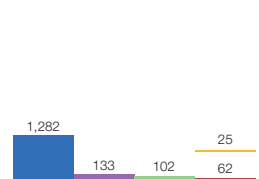
**Staff and administration expenditure** (Total 62.4%)



**Staff nos.** (Total 774)

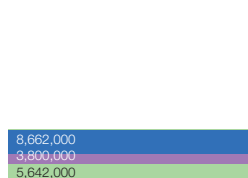


**Student nos.** (Total 1,604)

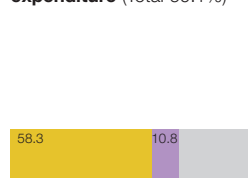


## The School of Pharmacy

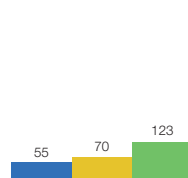
**Income** (Total £18,104,000)



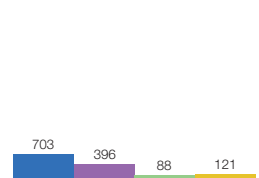
**Staff and administration expenditure** (Total 69.1%)



**Staff nos.** (Total 248)

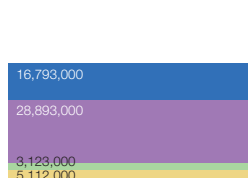


**Student nos.** (Total 1,308)

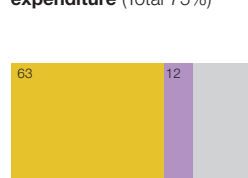


## School of Oriental and African Studies

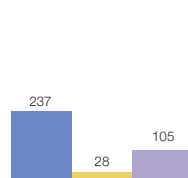
**Income** (Total £53,921,000)



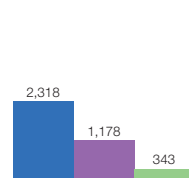
**Staff and administration expenditure** (Total 75%)



**Staff nos.** (Total 692)



**Student nos.** (Total 3,839)



### Key to graphics

#### Income (£000)

- HEFCE grants
- Tuition fees
- Research grants and contracts
- Other income

#### Expenditure (%)

- Staff costs
- Administration costs
- Other

#### Staff numbers (full-time and part-time)

- Academic
- Research
- Other

#### SOAS Only

- Teaching and Research
- Research
- Teaching only
- Other

#### Student numbers

- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate (T)
- Postgraduate (R)
- Distance learning

- Royal Veterinary College only
- Foundation degree full-time

## Reflections

**The Bloomsbury Colleges are looking forward to broadening and deepening their cooperation within the framework of the restructured University of London. The “grand project” of the London International Development Centre is well under way and the proven success of the Bloomsbury Learning Environment is also fully documented in this report. But there are other opportunities.**

The member institutions have strong independent identities which are recognised worldwide for their strengths in teaching and research. But by working together, they can achieve improved efficiencies in a number of areas. These may not be glamorous achievements but they have led either to savings or to improved services for the same outlay. The whole area of purchasing and procurement has serious opportunities for gains. Already the consortium has seen joint tendering in the areas of catering, cash carrying and

occupational health and extensive collaboration in practical and important services relating to security of the estates, health and safety and student residential accommodation.

The Bloomsbury Colleges will be examining a major development concerned with shared services with a focus on improving the student experience in the broadest terms. By working together, gains can be made in space sharing, creating new student learning space, widening library access across the colleges, and developing still further the range of student-focused welfare services.

The six institutions have great strengths and there is a great opportunity to develop these through, for example, the creation of a resource register which could cover academic and administrative personnel, equipment and physical space. A working example of this can be found in health and safety where the science-based colleges with laboratories and dangerous materials unsurprisingly have a greater need for

provision than the colleges which are humanities and social science-based. This has led to the science-based colleges taking a lead to the benefit of all.

The consortium is still at an early stage of its development and is taking an interest in other higher education consortia such as the Liverpool grouping. It is attempting to define an overall vision and the strategies needed to achieve it. That will inevitably lead to review of the leadership and governance of the group to ensure that objectives are met. But for the present, the free and voluntary association of the six independent institutions, enthusiastically supported by the governing bodies and the staff, is working well.



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