January 2020

The Board met in London on 28 January where the main agenda items were a discussion of the distinction between Associate and Alumni status and a review of a proposed new strategy to support the delivery of international events. Board members reviewed the current criteria for granting Associate status (currently 4 days for certain executive programmes). Associates have the potential to be valuable mentors to current students, a source of jobs, advocates for other programmes and potential donors. Board members discussed these benefits of widening the community along with the implications of granting status after only 4 days of a programme. It was agreed that the Chair and Director of Alumni Relations would review what other institutions offer and develop a proposal to be considered at the Board’s Spring meeting.

The Board then turned its attention to a discussion of the University’s strategy for international alumni outreach. In light of rising costs associated with delivering elaborate weekend-long alumni events in Asia, Europe and North America (every other year), the Alumni Office was tasked with developing a new approach that would reduce costs and ideally, increase participation. This proposal was presented to the VC and Pro-Vice Chancellor and involves a regional, multi-city strategy in which alumni in each city are invited to hear remarks by the Vice Chancellor followed by one or two academic sessions and ending with a networking reception. This strategy would allow for wider exposure and more alumni engagement whilst also being more mindful of finances. Board members offered general support for the new approach, pointing out that each region might need a different strategy to accommodate cultural difference and providing further suggestions for ensuring the events draw a strong audience.

The Board went on to discuss how to further embed the personas created by Forrester Consulting into the work of alumni engagement. They also had an update on Board Funds and agreed to earmark £5K to support an event in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the PPE degree. The Board also discussed the implications of cutting the print version of the alumni magazine QUAD; a victim of necessary budget cuts in the Alumni Office. And finally, Board Chair Nick Segal announced that he would be stepping down as chair after the next Board meeting. In addition to the Chair, the Deputy Chair, Helen Wright, and Jackie Ranawake would also be concluding their terms after the May meeting. A call was put out for any Board members willing to serve on the Nominations Committee charged with finding 4 candidates for open seats on the Board. Finally, the Board collectively thanked the retiring Board members all for their service and were invited to indicate their interest in serving as either Chair or Deputy Chair.