

**Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab: Report to UCL  
Council of independent inquiry panel**

September 2010

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page number</i>
Summary overview	3
Terms of reference	4
Membership of the inquiry panel	4
Methods and scope of work	5
The meaning of 'radicalisation'	5
The Christmas Day 2009 incident	7
Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab	8
UCL and UCL Union policies and procedures	12
UCL Union and its student societies	12
UCL student support structures and processes	16
Equipping students with critical skills and frameworks	20
Media coverage and fallout	21
Data protection issues	22
Conclusion	22
Recommendations	23
<hr/>	
Appendix 1 – Bibliography	25
Appendix 2 – Persons interviewed by the inquiry panel	28
Appendix 3 – Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab: chronology	29
Appendix 4 – Key Elements of the New Personal Tutoring Strategy	30
Appendix 5 – <i>Promoting good campus relations, fostering shared values and preventing violent extremism in Universities and Higher Education Colleges</i> (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills) (2006): summary of UCL's position in relation to key objectives etc	31
Appendix 6 – Key to abbreviations used in the report	37

## Summary overview

- i In January 2010 the Council, the governing body of UCL, set up an independent inquiry in the light of the incident which occurred on 25 December 2009 and which resulted in Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a former student of UCL, being charged with, *inter alia*, placing an explosive device on and attempting to blow up a US civil aircraft, and the attempted murder of the 289 people on board. The inquiry panel – comprising four members from outside UCL (including the Chair of the panel), as well as a representative of the lay members of UCL Council and two UCL staff – was asked to explore the nature of Mr Abdulmutallab's experience as an undergraduate student of UCL between 2005 and 2008, including his period as President of the student Islamic Society. The panel was also asked to investigate whether there were at UCL at that time conditions that might have led to Mr Abdulmutallab's engaging in acts of terrorism, and whether there are at UCL today conditions that might facilitate the possibility of other students doing so in future.
- ii The panel collected evidence of two main kinds, reading a wide range of documents and interviewing some 27 past and present members of the UCL community whom it was thought might be particularly well placed to offer useful insights on the issues. These witnesses included, among others: current and former student sabbatical officers of the UCL student union and members of its Islamic Society; staff and former students of UCL's Department of Mechanical Engineering, where Mr Abdulmutallab was registered for his undergraduate degree studies; and a range of UCL and UCL student union staff responsible for student support and welfare. The panel investigation's focused particularly on UCL's student support structures and processes, and on the management and monitoring of the operation of the UCL student union's clubs and societies. The panel also reviewed the media coverage of Mr Abdulmutallab's arrest and some data protection issues which arose in the aftermath of the Christmas Day 2009 incident.
- iii The panel, throughout the course of this inquiry, remained acutely sensitive to the appalling nature of the crimes which Mr Abdulmutallab is alleged to have committed, the gravity of the issues they raised for UCL (and for UK higher education more generally), and the weight of the responsibility therefore placed on the panel to ensure that the nature of Mr Abdulmutallab's experience as a student at UCL was thoroughly investigated.
- iv In the light of the investigations it has carried out, the panel concludes that there is no evidence to suggest either that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was radicalised while a student at UCL or that conditions at UCL during that time or subsequently are conducive to the radicalisation of students. The panel has nevertheless identified a number of areas of UCL and/or UCL student union operations where there is scope for strengthening current processes and recommends that UCL and/or the UCL student union as appropriate review these processes.

## Terms of reference

- 1 The independent inquiry was set up by the Council, the governing body of UCL, to consider:
  - the nature of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's experience at UCL, including his period as President of the student Islamic Society;
  - the extent to which Mr Abdulmutallab was converted to extremism while at UCL;
  - whether there were at that time and/or continue to be conditions at UCL that might have facilitated Mr Abdulmutallab's radicalisation and/or might facilitate the radicalisation of other students;
  - how UCL has discharged and continues to discharge its legal obligations to provide a platform for visiting speakers so as to secure freedom of speech on campus within the law;
  - whether there are lessons to be learned for the future and what changes to UCL processes might be needed as a result of these.
- 2 The inquiry panel was asked to submit a report and recommendations to the UCL Council, including such proposed changes to UCL processes as the panel deemed appropriate.

## Membership of the inquiry panel

- 3 The membership of the inquiry panel was as follows:
  - Dame Fiona Caldicott - Principal, Somerville College, Oxford and Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Oxford (*Chair*)
  - Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari - Secretary General, The Muslim Council of Britain
  - Dame Sandra Burslem - former Vice-Chancellor of Manchester Metropolitan University
  - Professor Anthony Finkelstein - Head of the UCL Department of Computer Science (and Dean-designate of the UCL Faculty of Engineering Sciences)
  - Lord Hart of Chilton - a lay member of the UCL Council
  - Dr Ruth Siddall - UCL's Dean of Students (Welfare)
  - Mr John Worne - Director of Strategy and External Relations, British Council

- 4 The above descriptions of the panel members reflect the position at the time of their appointment to the panel in early 2010. Dame Fiona Caldicott retired as Principal of Somerville College and Pro Vice-Chancellor at the end of the academic year 2009-10. Dr Abdul Bari's term as Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain ended in summer 2010. Professor Finkelstein became Dean of UCL's Faculty of Engineering Sciences in September 2010 and at the same time stepped down as Head of Computer Science. Lord Hart completed his term as a lay member of UCL Council in September 2010.
- 5 The panel's secretary was Mr Tim Perry, Secretary to UCL Council and UCL's Director of Academic Services, assisted by Mr Nick McGhee of UCL's Academic Services Department.

### **Methods and scope of work**

- 6 The panel convened for the first time in February 2010 and concluded its discussions in late September 2010. In the course of its inquiries, the panel collected evidence of two main kinds. First, we read a wide range of documents, including, *inter alia*: government guidance on the prevention of violent extremism in higher education institutions and in other communities in the UK; relevant policies and procedures of UCL and of the UCL student union (UCLU); details of Mr Abdulmutallab's original application to UCL and of his academic history during his period of study for a UCL degree; a selection of academic research publications in the field of radicalisation leading to violent extremism; and regular updates of press and media coverage of the incident of 25 December 2009 involving Mr Abdulmutallab (the 'Christmas Day incident' hereafter) and its aftermath. The bibliography at Appendix 1 lists the documents supplied to and read by the panel. Second, panel members conducted interviews with a range of past and present members of the UCL community whom the panel felt might be well placed to offer insights helpful to their work. Those interviewed are listed in Appendix 2. We are grateful to all those who took the time to meet with the panel and for the open and constructive way in which they gave evidence.
- 7 The panel noted from the outset that other investigations into the Christmas Day incident and its implications for British universities were taking place, including police and security services investigations of Mr Abdulmutallab's background and a Universities UK working group on academic freedom. Chaired by the President and Provost of UCL, the latter group is developing advice for universities across the country on the reconciliation of fundamental principles of academic freedom with the need to protect society against the threat of violent terrorism. We exchanged terms of reference with the Universities UK group so that we and they could be quite clear of the scope of our respective investigations. We took the view, however, that we should proceed with our investigations and form our own conclusions independently of these other initiatives, and without seeking information on the findings emerging from them.

### **The meaning of 'radicalisation'**

- 8 The panel is required by its terms of reference to consider whether conditions at UCL might have facilitated Mr Abdulmutallab's 'radicalisation'. We saw it as

fundamentally important to arrive at a clear understanding of the meaning of the word 'radicalisation' and explored the term with a number of those interviewed and the contributions of Dr Noemie Bouhana and Mr Yusuf Kaplan to this aspect of our discussions were particularly appreciated. We understand 'radicalisation' to be, essentially, the process of adopting a 'radical' ideology, *ie* a system of ideas that overtly challenges an established social and/or political order. 'Radicalisation' in that sense could obviously be expressed in a wide variety of ways: when we use the word in this report, we mean 'radicalisation' of a specific kind – *ie* as reflected in the behaviour of those whose radicalisation leads them to commit, or attempt to commit, terrorist acts. We are aware of the various meanings attached, depending on who is using them, to terms such as 'violent extremism', and are particularly aware, given the context of our inquiry, of the sensitivities surrounding terms linked particularly with Islam in the post-9/11 world – 'Islamism', 'jihadisation', *etc.* Apart from quoting from the relevant literature in the paragraphs immediately below, we have, because of the complexity and sensitivity of their meanings and connotations, deliberately avoided using these latter terms in this report. (It should be noted that none of the three research publications from which we quote explicitly defines these terms.)

- 9 The panel had a valuable discussion with Dr Noemie Bouhana, a member of academic staff of UCL's Department of Security and Crime Science, who is currently engaged in a systematic review for the Home Office of the literature relating to Al-Qaeda style radicalisation. She gave the panel an overview of the methodological challenges of such a project and drew our attention to some of the key texts in the scholarly literature currently available. These are included in the bibliography at Appendix 1.
- 10 In this connection, we noted with particular interest:
- the New York Police Department study *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*
  - the FDD's Center for Terrorism Research study *Homegrown Terrorists in the US and UK: An Empirical Examination of the Radicalization Process*
  - *Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: From Conversion to Terrorism*, a research report funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice.
- 11 The NYPD study suggests four stages to the radicalisation process:
- Stage 1: Pre-radicalization
  - Stage 2: Self-identification
  - Stage 3: Indoctrination
  - Stage 4: Jihadization.
- 12 The FDD study examines six manifestations of the radicalisation process that can be observed in homegrown terrorists:
- adopting a legalistic interpretation of Islam

- trusting only select religious authorities
  - perceived schism between Islam and the West
  - low tolerance for perceived theological deviance
  - attempts to impose religious beliefs on others
  - political radicalization
- 13 The report funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice suggests four phases of the process of radicalisation – from conversion to terrorism:
- Pre-Radicalisation
  - Conversion and identification
  - Conviction and indoctrination
  - Action
- 14 While we found much of interest in the publications we read, the panel recognises that academic research in this field is still at a relatively early stage of development and that there is not yet complete consensus within the academic community on, for example, definition of the causes and structure of the radicalisation process. We are conscious too that the academic research conducted to date largely comprises *ex post facto* studies. The fact that these studies analyse events which occurred in a variety of circumstances makes it all the more important to guard against inferring generalised patterns of behaviour from them.

### **The Christmas Day 2009 incident**

- 15 On Christmas Day 2009, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab travelled to Amsterdam, where he boarded a Northwest Airline flight en route to Detroit, Michigan. Eye witnesses reported that Mr Abdulmutallab spent about 20 minutes in the bathroom as it approached Detroit and covered himself with a blanket after returning to his seat. Passengers then heard popping noises and some saw Mr Abdulmutallab's trouser leg and the wall of the plane on fire. One of his fellow passengers subdued Mr Abdulmutallab as flight attendants used fire extinguishers to douse the flames. It transpired that Mr Abdulmutallab had had an explosive device sewn into his underwear. He was immediately arrested and, after being taken into custody, told US authorities that he had been directed by Al Qaeda, and had obtained the explosive device in Yemen. On 26 December 2009 Mr Abdulmutallab was charged with two criminal counts: attempting to blow up and placing a destructive device on a US civil aircraft. Further charges, including the attempted murder of 289 people, were added in a grand jury indictment on 6 January 2010. Mr Abdulmutallab is incarcerated at the Federal Correctional Institution, Milan, Michigan, pending further legal proceedings.
- 16 Mr Abdulmutallab is the third student or former student of UCL to have been charged with offences of this kind. Samar Alami, who obtained an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering at UCL and a taught master's degree from Imperial College, was convicted of detonating a car bomb outside the Israeli Embassy in London in 1994 and sentenced to 20 years in prison, which she is continuing to serve. Ms Alami was President of the student

Palestinian Society while at UCL. Mohammed Abushamma enrolled for a BSc Natural Sciences degree at UCL in September 2008. Unbeknown to the UCL authorities, he had been arrested in April that year: the circumstances came to light when his poor attendance was noted in the first term of his programme of study at UCL. It transpired that he had been attending court. Mr Abushamma pleaded guilty to preparing acts of terrorism and in June 2009 was sentenced to three years in prison.

### **Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab**

- 17 Born in 1986, Mr Abdulmutallab is the youngest of the 16 children of Alhaji Umaru Mutallab, the former Chairman of First Bank of Nigeria and former Nigerian Federal Commissioner for Economic Development. Mr Abdulmutallab was raised in an affluent neighbourhood of Kaduna in the north of Nigeria and at the family home in Nairobi. A chronology of basic biographical facts about Mr Abdulmutallab, from 1993 until Christmas Day 2009, is at Appendix 3.
- 18 Mr Abdulmutallab gained a place at UCL on the BEng Engineering and Business Finance programme and enrolled for the first year of this three-year programme in September 2005, in the Department of Mechanical Engineering. The documentary evidence of his student record supplied by the UCL Registry suggests that he was a satisfactory but not an academically outstanding student. He graduated with a 2:2 degree in 2008.
- 19 Press and media coverage in the immediate aftermath of the Christmas Day incident suggested that, from a young age, Umar Farouk was known by his fellow pupils and school teachers as a devout Muslim. He was a member of the UCL Union's Islamic Society (ISoc) throughout his time as a UCL undergraduate and became its President during his second year (2006-07). (The panel learned from talking with ISoc representatives that the role of President is time-consuming and that it is common for a second-year undergraduate student to be elected ISoc President, as final-year students tend to be too busy with preparation for examinations - see paragraph 33 for further details of the ISoc President's role.) The combination of his academic studies, his involvement with UCLU ISoc, his religious observances, and the social activities in which he engaged with other UCL students occupied a large part of Mr Abdulmutallab's time during his three years at UCL. We have no information about any of his other activities outside UCL during his period of registration.
- 20 The former students whom we met who had known Mr Abdulmutallab at UCL reported little contact with him following his graduation from UCL in summer 2008. Their testimony was to the effect that he sent one or two group e-mails to former fellow students, explaining that he had returned to Nigeria for a break and would then continue his business studies in Dubai. One of his fellow members of the ISoc noticed that Mr Abdulmutallab had logged on to Gmail chat in December 2008 and sent him a message but received no response. In terms of post-graduation contact with UCL staff, we were informed that Mr Abdulmutallab, after returning to Nigeria, wrote to his project supervisor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, asking whether she would be willing to act as a referee

in respect of his application for an MBA degree programme in the US, although she does not recall in the event being asked for such a reference.

- 21 There was nothing in Mr Abdulmutallab's application to UCL that would or should have given an admissions tutor cause for concern. The panel proceeded to investigate whether there were any signs, during his time at UCL, of a propensity to radicalisation – signs, that is, which might have been noticed by his fellow students or by staff. We talked with a trio of staff who taught and tutored him in the Department of Mechanical Engineering during his programme of study, as well as with former students in the same BEng degree cohort, members of the UCLU ISoc, and the 2006-07 UCLU student sabbatical officers who met with Mr Abdulmutallab during the year of his presidency of ISoc. The picture that emerged from these interviews was consistent. All those with whom we talked characterised Mr Abdulmutallab as modest and polite; they remembered him as a quiet, well-spoken, affable student. He was described by members of his peer group as someone who enjoyed social interaction, much of it light-hearted; he was a keen soccer player. Few of his fellow students were aware of his affluent background and none of those with whom we talked had visited the place where he lived in London. All interviewees who knew Mr Abdulmutallab professed astonishment at his involvement in the Christmas Day 2009 incident.
- 22 We found no evidence of any significant change in Mr Abdulmutallab's character or behaviour during his time at UCL. There was no sign of an upheaval in his private life. Like most of his contemporaries he concentrated more on his academic studies in his final year, and in common with other international students, gained in confidence as he acclimatised to life in the UK. He was evidently religious and a distinctive figure, to staff and students, because of the way he dressed. A fellow Muslim student reported frequently meeting Mr Abdulmutallab praying in UCL's contemplation/quiet room (a space available for members of all different faiths and those of no faith within the UCL community). The same student remembers meeting Mr Abdulmutallab at the Freshers Fayre at the start of the Autumn Term 2005 and perceiving immediately, from his appearance, that he was a Muslim student from overseas. Another Muslim student recalled that Mr Abdulmutallab always wore traditional Nigerian dress for prayers on Fridays. The evidence, in other words, is that he did not change the way he dressed during his time at UCL – although, even if he had done so, it would not be reasonable to interpret such outward signs of religious devoutness as evidence in itself of a propensity to radicalisation. One of his fellow students in Mechanical Engineering made a remark to the effect that he thought Mr Abdulmutallab a particularly unlikely terrorist because, had he been approached by political extremists, he would have been well equipped to counter their views through his own knowledge of the teachings of the Koran.
- 23 We were told by one former student that Muslim students in the Department of Mechanical Engineering occasionally sought religious advice from Mr Abdulmutallab because they regarded him as particularly knowledgeable. On the other hand, two other students, fellow members of ISoc, did not consider Mr Abdulmutallab as especially knowledgeable in this respect. It was suggested to us by a third ISoc representative that a possible reason for others not turning to Mr Abdulmutallab for religious guidance may have been his relative lack of familiarity, as an international

- student, with British culture. In any case, we did not gain an impression of Mr Abdulmutallab as someone who tried repeatedly to convert others to his own religious point of view. He did not put any pressure on fellow Muslim students to be as religiously observant as he himself was. One such student described how Mr Abdulmutallab, on his way to prayers, would sometimes look at other students as if to encourage them to follow his example but felt that he did this with a degree of humour and certainly without explicitly exhorting them to follow suit.
- 24 We learned that Mr Abdulmutallab was encouraged by his predecessor in the role to stand for the ISoc presidency. In the event, he was elected to the position by default as the other ISoc member running withdrew his candidacy at a late stage. As there was no real contest, Mr Abdulmutallab did not produce a manifesto; ISoc members were content with his election and did not feel it necessary to reopen the nominations process. Mr Abdulmutallab was evidently a quiet but an effective ISoc President, dedicating a good deal of his time to the Society even during preparations for examinations. The Society's charity fund-raising reached approximately £10,000 in 2006-07, which we understood to be an unusually large annual amount. In this context too, we learned that Mr Abdulmutallab did not seek to impose his views on other members of the Society or introduce any significant changes to the way the Society was run. Decisions over inviting speakers during the year of his presidency were taken by the ISoc committee as a whole, not least because Mr Abdulmutallab was less familiar than some of the other committee members with the range of speakers available in the UK.
- 25 A good deal was made in press and media coverage of Mr Abdulmutallab's role in organising the ISoc's 'War on Terror' week during the year of his presidency. We learned from his immediate predecessor as President that the ISoc committee saw the week in question as an important opportunity to address issues that were not otherwise widely discussed on campus and that he, rather than Mr Abdulmutallab, had been mainly responsible for organising the event. As current ISoc President, Mr Abdulmutallab was required to sign off the arrangements for the week but he was not a principal organiser. His immediate predecessor as President also recalled Mr Abdulmutallab attending only two of the 'War on Terror' week events as he was very busy with academic work at the time. We noted that the corresponding event in the following academic year, when Mr Abdulmutallab was still a member of ISoc, was renamed 'Justice Week' and its scope extended to cover issues such as Darfur.
- 26 The causes and outcomes of student isolation are various. We explored whether Mr Abdulmutallab might have been particularly vulnerable to approaches from radicalising influences, either groups or individuals, as a result of being isolated or lonely. The picture of him that emerged from our interviews with those who had known him at UCL, as summarised above (see paragraph 21 in particular), suggested that Mr Abdulmutallab was neither isolated nor lonely during his undergraduate studies but we also noted the section on web postings in the current Wikipedia entry on him. (Without regarding information on Wikipedia as authoritative, the panel took the view that, since this information is so widely read, we should take note of it.) The Wikipedia entry refers to web postings by 'Farouk1986' and it has been suggested that Mr Abdulmutallab is the author of these postings, although this has not been independently confirmed. These postings express not only religious devoutness but also feelings of loneliness and

uncertainty about the conflicts between the writer's religious views and his feelings about women. Another of these web posts mentions jihadist fantasies, which contradicts the picture that we gained of Mr Abdulmutallab during his time at UCL. With one exception (dated January 2006), the web posts quoted predate his enrolling as a student at UCL. The aforementioned research report funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice (see paragraph 13 above) notes in its description of 'Phase 3: Conviction and indoctrination' that 'potential extremists usually begin to isolate themselves from their former life ...'. It is worth noting that, while there is no evidence that Mr Abdulmutallab was socially isolated while at UCL, we gained a consistent picture of his ceasing social contact with those he had known at UCL between late 2008 and 2009.

- 27 UCL's Faculty of Engineering Sciences has a notably high proportion of international students. For the academic year 2009-10 a total of 3,005 students were registered for degrees in the Faculty's departments, including 1,613 undergraduate, 865 taught graduate and 527 research graduate students. The percentages (numbers) of UK, other EU and non-EU students in each group were as follows:

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Other EU</i>	<i>Non-EU</i>
Undergraduate	53% (846)	13% (217)	34% (550)
Postgraduate (taught)	49% (428)	17% (144)	34% (293)
Postgraduate (research)	55% (291)	20% (104)	25% (132)
Total	52% (1,565)	15% (465)	33% (975)

We considered whether international students were more likely to feel isolated and were thus more vulnerable, and whether there were particular challenges for international students to integrate with home students in a city of the size and complexity of London. There is a naturally greater risk for international students, on first coming to London, to experience feelings of isolation and we would endorse the views expressed by one the former student sabbatical officers of UCLU whom we met that the review of systems and processes arising from the Christmas Day incident in effect gives UCL and UCLU an opportunity to explore ways of helping international students to integrate more fully with the UCL student community as a whole. We found no evidence, however, beyond the single web post of January 2006 referred to above, that Mr Abdulmutallab showed any signs of being isolated while at UCL. Our discussions with a number of staff and students made it clear, nevertheless, that a student who was not disposed to engage with UCL student welfare services would not have found it difficult to keep a distance from them. We address this issue further in paragraphs 44-49 below.

- 28 We are satisfied that there is no evidence either that Mr Abdulmutallab showed signs of a propensity to radicalisation while at UCL or that his gravitation towards violent extremism took place during his time at UCL. We are satisfied too that no student support system, however sophisticated, would have drawn attention to Mr Abdulmutallab as a potential terrorist for the simple reason that there is no evidence to suggest that he was developing such tendencies while a student at UCL. Broader student welfare services would also have been unlikely to have identified Mr Abdulmutallab as in need of support. The evidence is that he was not lonely or isolated while at UCL and that he became well integrated into the student body with supportive friendships and social structures.

## **UCL and UCL Union policies and procedures**

- 29 To assess whether there were in the period 2005-08 and/or continue to be conditions at UCL that might have facilitated or might facilitate the radicalisation of students, we naturally saw it as important to explore the robustness – both on paper and in practice – of UCL and UCL Union (UCLU) student welfare and support structures and processes, and the management and monitoring of the operation of UCLU student societies. The panel also noted UCL’s policies and procedures in respect of freedom of speech and reflecting current equalities legislation *etc* (see also paragraph 50).

## **UCL Union and its student societies**

- 30 In the academic year 2009-10 there were more than 160 clubs and societies ('societies' hereafter) receiving support, facilities and funding from UCLU, and operating within its legal and managerial infrastructure. Every society must be open and available to all members of UCL and, to quote documentation supplied to the panel by UCLU, 'UCL Union does not affiliate societies aimed at specific groups of students (for example college departmental societies)'. UCLU rules require that all publicity materials for student societies are produced in English or with an English translation. Within UCLU the officers principally responsible for overseeing the operation of student societies include the Student Activities Officer (who is one of the student sabbatical officers of the Union), the Activities and Development Manager (who is a member of UCLU's permanent staff), and the Union's General Manager (who heads that permanent staff).
- 31 UCLU operates a process whereby members of the Union proposing the creation of a new society are required to submit a formal application, which is considered by the appropriate UCLU machinery of governance. The application process defines affiliation criteria and is designed to enable UCLU to 'continue to provide a broad range of good quality opportunities for UCL Students and so that our limited resources are used efficiently to maximise this breadth and depth of opportunity'. Creation of a new student society requires completion by its sponsors of an application form, including a wide range of information about the purposes and perceived benefits to the UCL student community of the proposed society. An application is first considered by an appropriate UCLU sub-board, according to the category of the proposed society, which makes a recommendation to the UCLU Activities Board as to whether or not the proposed society should be affiliated or whether the proposal requires further consideration before a decision is made. The Activities Board comprises a representative of each of the Arts Board, the Societies Board and the Sports Board, as well as student sabbatical and other UCLU officers. In addition, the constitution of each new society requires the approval of UCLU's Governance Committee. Disaffiliation of student societies is similarly a matter for the Activities Board: grounds for disaffiliation may include a society's failing to abide by the UCLU constitution or being insufficiently active. The panel was supplied with documentary evidence to illustrate the operation of this process. We are satisfied that the UCLU processes for affiliating and disaffiliating student societies are appropriate and effective.

- 32 A faith-based student society should not, according to UCLU policy, be seeking converts to the faith. We understood from UCLU representatives, however, that student societies generally may engage in 'outreach' activities. It seemed to the panel that the distinction between 'outreach' and seeking converts, in the context of a faith-based society, was a fine one. UCLU's faith-based societies include three which are Islam-based: the UCLU ISoc, the RUMS (Royal Free and UCL Medical School<sup>1</sup>) ISoc and the Ahlul-Bayt Society. The operation of the Ahlul-Bayt Society alongside the two ISocs is a reminder of the complex issues involved in distinguishing between the different strands of Islamic faith. While Ahlul-Bayt is one such strand, it was not clear to the panel why there were separate UCLU and RUMS ISocs and we looked into the background to it. UCL merged with the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine in 1998 and the funding stream for some RUMS societies has for historical reasons been kept separate from that of other societies, although their operating criteria are the same. We understand that, while there is a move to increasing assimilation of these formally separate societies, the current situation is that, where there is a RUMS society analogous to an existing society, RUMS students are free to join either or both, whereas students outside the Medical School cannot join the RUMS society. The UCLU ISoc and the RUMS ISoc are one example of this arrangement. The references to the ISoc that follow are to the UCLU ISoc, unless otherwise indicated.
- 33 ISoc's principal role is to meet the religious needs of UCL's Muslim students, specifically through arranging Friday prayers and through a programme of events which includes charitable and social events and the annual Muslim Awareness Week. ISoc generally reflects a mainstream interpretation of Islam, and seeks to find common ground between members from different cultures with a different understanding of the religion. Of the estimated 2,000 Muslim students at UCL, approximately 100 attend Friday prayers. Each week the ISoc President chooses an ISoc member to lead the prayers. The President does not routinely lead prayers as it involves a considerable amount of preparation (although we understood that Mr Abdulmutallab led prayers on a few occasions during the year of his presidency of ISoc). Speakers invited by ISoc to give talks are selected by the President and an executive committee of ISoc members.
- 34 There is a mandatory induction and training programme for presidents and treasurers of UCLU societies. (Failure to attend the induction results in the society concerned being unable to draw on its grant.) An additional element of training, relating to the booking of rooms and external speakers, has recently been incorporated into the programme. This change has been made following the cancellation on health and safety grounds of a small number of events during the past year because UCLU staff had only realised at the last minute that the speaker was controversial and potentially a focus for protest (see also paragraph 37 *etc* below).

---

<sup>1</sup> The Royal Free and University College Medical School of UCL was renamed the UCL Medical School in 2008 but we understand that the term 'RUMS' is still used within UCLU.

- 35 Maintaining both a commitment to freedom of speech and the moral and legal obligation to prevent incitement to violence or hatred on campus is clearly a sensitive balance to strike. UCLU has not adopted and, we learned from the Union's representatives, currently has no plans to adopt in future the 'no platform' policy recommended by the National Union of Students (NUS) briefing document *Not in my front room: no platform policies – a guide for students' unions*. The NUS document defines the aims of a 'no platform' policy as follows:

To prevent individuals or groups known to hold racist, fascist views from speaking at union events.

To ensure that executive members will not share a public platform with individuals or groups known to hold racist or fascist views.

The NUS policy proscribes several organisations including the British National Party, Combat 18, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, MPAC UK and the National Front. We understand, both from UCLU representatives and from the NUS, that the 'no platform policy' has been adopted by the majority of university student unions in the UK, although the NUS was unable to be more specific about the actual number of unions which have adopted the policy.

- 36 UCLU sees its policy on visiting speakers as being to prevent from speaking only those individuals whose views are known to be illegal; it was suggested to the panel by UCLU representatives that speakers with controversial but not illegal views were welcome to the extent that they could be expected to stimulate debate. While this seems to us an entirely legitimate position to take, we felt that it effectively increased the need for robust processes for monitoring invitations to visiting speakers (there are tens of external speakers invited to address societies each week during term time) and we considered the existing UCLU processes carefully.
- 37 There were two cases for concern with speakers invited during the academic year 2009-10, one invited by ISoc and the other by the Ahlul-Bayt Society. In the former case UCLU had been contacted in advance by civil liberties groups with concerns about the speaker's homophobic views but the event was eventually cancelled through the intervention of the UCL authorities on the grounds of health and safety. In the latter case the event had been approved by the UCLU and the UCL authorities but had drawn protests on a scale that overwhelmed the security provided. The event went ahead but was called off after only a few minutes. We learned that an immediate review of UCLU's external speaker approval procedure had been set up a few weeks before the Christmas Day incident, in the light of the first case described above. During the 2010 summer vacation a further event organised by ISoc caused media comment because of the controversial nature of one of the invited speakers in particular. We refer further to this latest event in paragraphs 39 and 40 below.
- 38 The revised procedure, implemented during January 2010, requires completion by the UCLU student society concerned of an external speaker request form, which now carries a disclaimer stating that 'Failure to disclose full speaker details may result in your event/booking being cancelled and could result in referral for

- UCLU/UCL disciplinary action'. An administrative assistant in UCLU now extracts external speaker data from the central UCL room bookings spreadsheet before checking all speakers on Google (after first looking at any web link provided by the society), looking at the first page of results found. This information is then noted on a spreadsheet, including a link to the most relevant information about the speaker. UCLU's Activities and Development Manager reviews the completed spreadsheet twice weekly and refers any speakers that may require further investigation of potential security and/or health and safety issues to the Student Activities Officer and UCLU's General Manager. The Activities and Development Manager provides up to three hyperlinks to the most relevant Google results for any speakers that are a cause for concern. An additional overview is provided by UCLU's Membership Services Manager, to whom the spreadsheet is sent once weekly for review. Cases of speakers raising cause for concern are considered by (i) the Student Activities Officer (or, in the absence of the Student Activities Officer, the UCLU's Democracy and Engagement Officer, who is a student) and (ii) UCLU's General Manager (or, in the absence of the General Manager, the UCLU Senior Management Team nominee). These two officers consider the security and/or health and safety implications of the event taking place and reach a decision on approval or otherwise, considering advice, where they think appropriate, from the UCL authorities, including the Vice-Provost (Operations). Decisions are made in accordance with UCL's code of conduct on freedom of speech. The society concerned is informed of the outcome within two weeks of their initial request.
- 39 While the revised process is an improvement on the one that operated until early 2010, the panel considers that it needs to be further reviewed and should be strengthened. (For example, a single page of results on Google search is not necessarily an extensive or accurate evidence base for determining whether there may be cause for concern in inviting the proposed speaker proposed.) Our view has been confirmed by the fact that the process appears not to have worked satisfactorily in respect of the ISoc event of August 2010 referred to in paragraph 37 above: we understand that publicity for the event, including details of the speakers involved, was issued before UCLU had approved those speakers. This appears to have been an unfortunate accident of timing - a consequence of UCLU officers involved in the Union's visiting speaker approval process being on annual leave at the time - but a procedure of this kind clearly needs to be robust enough to operate effectively at all times. (We understand from UCLU that the actual event went off successfully.) We respect the Union's commitment to promoting freedom of speech but think that, given the increasing complexity and sensitivity of the issues this entails, UCLU might look to develop, in consultation with the UCL authorities, a more sophisticated understanding of them, and a more nuanced position than regarding it as acceptable for a speaker to be invited simply on the basis that he or she is not expected to break the law. UCL too may wish to review its code of practice on freedom of speech in the light of the report of the Universities UK working group which the Provost is chairing.
- 40 While the procedural issues arising from the August 2010 event referred to above are regrettable, we noted from our meeting with the student sabbatical officers concerned that during the year of Mr Abdulmutallab's presidency ISoc was one of the most efficiently run student societies affiliated to UCLU, with all UCLU

regulations for the operation of student societies being adhered to, and deadlines met. We think there are no substantial grounds for characterising the UCLU ISoc of recent years as a radical group; and that, if there had been evidence to the contrary, this would have been brought to the attention of UCLU sabbatical officers and management. What is beyond the Union's purview, however, is what happens off campus and we considered whether student societies were in any way 'prey' for external extremist individuals or groups. If external agencies were intent on making contact with intelligent young Muslims with technical skills, they might well choose to target student union Islamic societies but the evidence for this actually happening at UCL seems to us non-existent. We found no evidence of an extremist sub-culture operating within the UCLU ISoc either during the year of Mr Abdulmutallab's presidency or in the preceding year (when he was a first year student) or subsequently.

- 41 UCLU societies currently make more than 3,000 room bookings per year. Wherever society events take place in centrally-bookable space the proposed arrangements are notified to the appropriate office in UCL's Estates and Facilities Division and this in effect provides an additional mechanism for monitoring the activities in question. This is not the case, however, if an event takes place in a UCL location which is not centrally-bookable space. The panel feels that UCLU should supply further information on the number of society events which do not take place in centrally-bookable locations and should then consider, in consultation with the UCL authorities, ways of ensuring that these events are subject to some kind of central scrutiny before they go ahead.
- 42 As indicated above (paragraph 30), UCLU does not affiliate student societies based in individual departments of UCL. Moreover we understand that UCL publishes no guidance to departments on the operation of such societies and that there is no central record of them. We understand that the Provost and the Vice-Provost (Operations) are now addressing what seem to us significant lacunae in UCL's overview of student society operations.

### ***UCL student support structures and processes***

- 43 The Dean of Students (Academic) and the Dean of Students (Welfare) co-ordinate the operation of UCL's structures for academic and pastoral advice to students. Both Deans work particularly closely with the Vice-Provost (Academic and International). The tutoring structure is central to UCL's student welfare and pastoral support services. Within a hierarchy of tutors, a student's Personal Tutor or Departmental Tutor will be the principal focus for academic advice. Faculty Tutors, at faculty level, and Postgraduate Advisers, at academic department level, have managerial roles in the context of student academic matters but may also see students with individual difficulties either at the request of the student or at the request of another tutor. In terms of pastoral advice, Departmental Tutors and Postgraduate Supervisors are often the first to be consulted by students but, depending on the nature of the problem and the individual student, advice may be sought directly from the Dean of Students (Welfare), UCL's Adviser to Women Students, the Student Counselling Service or the UCL Union's Rights and Advice Office. Within the Corporate Support Services of UCL, the Registry naturally has the most extensive range of responsibilities for student services.

- 44 While UCL's student support arrangements have been repeatedly commended by external academic quality assurance reports on UCL and its academic departments, UCL had gleaned evidence from its own internal quality monitoring processes that made it clear that personal tutoring arrangements varied greatly across departments. During the academic year 2007-08, a major review was undertaken of the operation of the personal tutor scheme. More recently, UCL has commissioned external consultants to conduct a review of student services, which we understand will be taking place in the immediate future. Proposals for strengthening the personal tutoring scheme and its application across UCL as a whole were approved by UCL's Academic Committee at its meeting in July 2008 and piloted in a range of departments during the following session. In March 2010 Academic Committee approved a UCL 'Personal Tutoring Strategy' for formal implementation from the start of the academic year 2010-11 – for all undergraduate and all taught graduate students. An extract from the strategy, setting out key elements of the revised scheme, is at Appendix 4.
- 45 The Personal Tutoring Strategy – in particular its requirement for more regular meetings between Personal Tutors and their tutees – seems to us both a positive development and one that was needed. We naturally focused attention in our inquiries on arrangements within the Department of Mechanical Engineering, where Mr Abdulmutallab was based. We gained the impression, from our discussions with both staff and former students of the Department, of a 'hands-off' approach in the area of student support. Former students felt that, while there were a number of introductory meetings at the start of their first year which covered student support services within the Department and across UCL, for the most part they were expected to 'work things out' for themselves. These former students praised the Department's current Admissions Tutor and a number of other staff who were felt to take pains and work long hours to support students but suggested that their experience at UCL would have been enhanced if this had been true of the Department's staff more generally. Mechanical Engineering staff described the personal tutor system as designed for students who feel a need for it. The Personal Tutoring Strategy clearly signals an important change in this respect: tutor-tutee meetings will take place even where the student considers that they have no immediate academic or pastoral needs. The Personal Tutoring Strategy includes the following statement, which seems to us important:
- The need for pastoral care varies widely amongst students. However, we know that students who do not address such basic needs as good health, the need for safety and security and a sense of belonging may find it more difficult to learn effectively and to meet UCL's high standards of achievement. The Personal Tutoring scheme is an opportunity for each department to provide pastoral support where and when it is needed, empowering the student in dealing swiftly and effectively with issues arising in their engagement with higher education. The UCL Transition Programme, and the peer-mentoring scheme in particular, provide opportunities to foster student participation in UCL's learning community and also to identify and refer first-year students who may need additional support.
- 46 We explored UCL's arrangements for reporting matters of concern in respect of students. A statement on academic and pastoral advice to students in UCL's

- Academic Manual* states clearly that 'It is not uncommon for cross-referral between the various sources of welfare support and, provided this is done with the student's full knowledge, it is another important feature of the system'. There is of course a balance to be struck here between respecting confidentiality and duty of care to students but we gained the impression from a number of staff that they saw the former as the stronger imperative – or were not clear, if they were in two minds about drawing the attention of others to the concerns they felt about a particular student's welfare, how to go about seeking advice. We gathered from talking with members of the UCL chaplaincy (see paragraph 51 below) that, while confidentiality was a fundamental principle of the student/chaplain relationship, the chaplains recognised that they needed always to bear in mind their moral obligation not to permit students to harm themselves or others. The panel strongly agrees that duty of care to students must ultimately override a commitment to confidentiality.
- 47 Some of our discussions with former student and UCLU student officers are also relevant here. For example, a number of the ISoc representatives told us that, if they had had concerns about an ISoc member becoming radicalised, they would have been more likely to try to address the issue themselves, by confronting the student concerned in the first instance and perhaps then speaking with the individual's family, than refer the matter to an appropriate officer in UCL's student welfare services. Among the student sabbatical officers for 2009-10, the Welfare Officer was clear that, if she were made aware of any activities within the student community liable to incite racial or gender discrimination, she would raise the matter with the Dean of Students (Welfare), with whom the Welfare Officer meets regularly. These meetings are in addition to the regular meetings between the sabbatical officers team and the Provost, which the Dean of Students (Welfare) also attends; and the current sabbatical officers informed us that, because they had a positive relationship with UCL and felt they were well supported by UCL senior management, they would feel able to raise matters of concern in that forum.
- 48 Although we do not think these factors made a material difference in the case of Mr Abdulmutallab, we were concerned that staff and students might not be confident of how to follow up concerns about a student they perceived to be at risk. We consider that UCL should take action to ensure that its policies and procedures in this area are not only clearly documented but more effectively communicated. Staff should always be prepared to raise concerns with a student, tactfully and sensitively, that they have about his or her welfare. We recognise that raising such matters with students in distress can be difficult, however, and suggest there may be a staff training issue to be addressed here. We understand, for example, that the UCL Counselling Service regularly runs a workshop on identifying students with mental health issues but staff do not appear to receive training in when or how to intervene. Increased awareness of the provisions of the Terrorism Acts is another aspect of staff training which it may be appropriate for UCL to consider.
- 49 The Department of Mechanical Engineering arranges a number of events where staff and students can mix in a social setting but staff or former staff of UCL whom we met with thought it fair to say that the extent of extra-curricular interaction between staff

- and students had reduced over recent years against a background of continually expanding student numbers and increasing staff workload, and with growing numbers of UCL staff commuting from outside London. We were struck too by the fact that academic staff had a very limited awareness of UCLU activities or the involvement in these activities of students in their department: the members of academic staff in Mechanical Engineering who, we understood, knew him best were not aware that Mr Abdulmutallab was President of the UCLU ISoc. While not suggesting that this is a major issue (or one that could easily be addressed given current student numbers and the pressures on staff time), it seems to us a feature of the present staff-student culture of UCL that is worth noting.
- 50 Media interest in and discussion at UCL about the issue of Islamic extremists seeking to infiltrate British university campuses did not begin with the aftermath to the Christmas Day 2009 incident. In October 2006, for example, UCL's Vice-Provost (Academic and International) met to discuss the matter with members of UCL's Development and Corporate Communications office and representatives of the UCLU ISocs, including Mr Abdulmutallab, who had recently become ISoc President. While UCL has evidently been alert to the issue in this sense, we noted that dissemination of key government publications across the UCL community has been limited to date. We understand that the Labour Government's 'Prevent' strategy<sup>2</sup> was neither discussed by UCL's senior management nor drawn to the attention of UCL staff. The document *Promoting good campus relations, fostering shared values and preventing violent extremism in Universities and Higher Education Colleges*, produced by the (then) Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2006) was discussed within the Provost's senior management team but systematic implementation of the advice contained in the document appears to have been low key. The panel has collected information from UCL officers on how UCL currently stands in relation to each of the 'key objectives' etc identified in the DIUS document and this summary forms Appendix 5 to our report. It is clear that UCL is adhering to most of the advice in the DIUS document but we hope that this collection of information may help the university to develop a more structured approach to monitoring these areas in future.
- 51 At the time of its founding in 1826, UCL was the first English university to admit members of any race or religious or political belief. UCL's 'secular' traditions remain an important part of its institutional character and may explain its low-key approach to chaplaincy services for the UCL community. Until a few years ago UCL did no more than provide students with a list of contact details for sources of religious support and advice. UCL now has three chaplains: they have a UCL e-mail address and ID card, although none of them is remunerated by UCL. The two Anglican chaplains receive a stipend from the Bishop of London. In late 2009 an Interfaith Adviser, who is also employed by the University of Westminster as Muslim Chaplain, took up an honorary appointment at UCL. The three members of the chaplaincy characterise their role as principally pastoral rather than religious. One of the Anglican chaplains told us that nothing

---

<sup>2</sup> The Government booklet *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England* was published in June 2008. *An Updated Guide for Local Partners* was published in August 2009.

would have come of her appointment if she had not been proactive in starting a dialogue with members of the UCL community but that she would not have been able to achieve as much as she has without the willing cooperation of UCL staff. She is careful to maintain links with leaders of other faith groups in order to be able to refer those from whom she receives enquiries to appropriate places of worship; and feels this can be particularly useful in the case of overseas students looking for the type of faith communities with which they are familiar. The panel was impressed by the conscientious and realistic approach of all three of the chaplaincy members but sensed an understandable frustration that there is limited publicity of and awareness across the wider UCL community of the services that they offer.

- 52 Shortly after its founding UCL was famously referred to as ‘that Godless institution in Gower Street’. The view was expressed to us by several of those we interviewed, including current academic staff, that UCL’s traditions had since come to be interpreted by some members of its community as ‘anti-religious’ rather than ‘secular’ and that this is a negative distortion of UCL’s ‘Let them all come’ traditions. We noted with interest the current HEFCE-funded ‘Religious Literacy Leadership’ project, which aims to help senior university managers to develop an improved understanding of the language used to deal with faith. We think that UCL might find it useful to review its understanding of its ‘secularity’. More broadly, as indicated in paragraph 51 above, we would encourage UCL to consider developing a more structured approach to promoting good campus relations in the areas covered by the DIUS document of 2006.

### **Equipping students with critical skills and frameworks**

- 53 UCL takes seriously what it sees as a duty to consider how to support its students to become thinking members of the communities to which they will be returning after graduation. ‘Global citizenship’ is a key element of UCL’s International Strategy and is defined on the UCL website as follows:

UCL is a world-class, research-led, multi-faculty university, consciously and deliberately global and wide-ranging in its reach and ambition. We strive for excellence and are committed to making a difference in the world; our aim is to provide an educational environment that reflects these values and supports our students to develop in the round. We believe that a university can and should aim to shape students’ personal and social development, as well as encourage their intellectual growth. This is what we mean when we talk of a UCL ‘education for global citizenship’: the term encapsulates all that we do at UCL to enable our students to respond to the intellectual, social and personal challenges that they will encounter throughout their future lives and careers.

- 54 It was against this background that we explored with a number of current and former students the extent to which they felt ready to challenge extremist views and/or views encouraging violence for political purposes, in public meetings as well as in private conversation, and we sensed on their part some diffidence in doing so. It was suggested too in media coverage following the Christmas Day 2009 incident that an unusually high proportion of terrorists have a background in engineering; as noted in Appendix 1, one of the academic publications drawn to our attention was an article entitled *Why are there so*

*many Engineers among Islamic Radicals?*. This led us to explore whether UCL might consider, as an educational response to the events we were investigating, the development of academic training for students to encourage and equip them not only to think critically but to challenge unacceptable views. We noted with interest that the London School of Economics had introduced a successful first year module designed ‘to produce students whose intellectual grounding in their discipline is complemented by an understanding of different ways of thinking’. There are already various examples of ethically-oriented elements within particular syllabuses at UCL. The ‘Professional Development Spine’ within the Medical School curriculum covers such disciplines as communication skills and ethics. In Mechanical Engineering, an ethical element is built into the course on financial elements of project management, as required for professional accreditation purposes. This area is probably worth exploring further but, while there may be a case for further strengthening the ethical dimension of the syllabus in certain subjects, we are not persuaded that it would be desirable to overlay unintegrated ethical elements onto UCL programmes of study generally.

### **Media coverage and fallout**

- 55 Enquiries from journalists began to be received by UCL on 26 December 2009 about the incident of the previous day and the UCL press officer on duty at the time received approximately 160 phone calls in the first four to five hours after the story broke. A second wave of enquiries soon followed as journalists tried to make contact with UCL staff and students who might have had contact with Mr Abdulmutallab. The Provost, despite being abroad when the story broke, gave a number of interviews at an early stage.
- 56 The revelation that Mr Abdulmutallab was a graduate of UCL sparked extensive comment and considerable criticism, of British universities generally and UCL in particular, in the press and broadcast media both in the UK and internationally, especially of course in the USA. We learned that the numbers attending ISoc Friday prayers dropped markedly following the Christmas Day incident. The ISoc members with whom we talked felt this was principally due to concern on the part of students’ parents, in the light of media coverage and comment, that ISoc was a radicalising influence. A representative of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FoSIS) to whom we spoke was hopeful, nevertheless, that the Christmas Day incident would enable FoSIS, through the increased media attention it is receiving, to make more people aware of the positive work it is doing. It is clear that UCL’s response to negative media coverage, and particularly that of the Provost, is felt to have been supportive and appreciated by FoSIS.
- 57 We learned from UCL’s Media Relations Office that they are considering increasing the availability of media training for senior UCL officers but we feel that UCL dealt well with what was a very challenging event in terms of its public relations import and reputational risk. The Media Relations Office subsequently commissioned independent research into journalists’ perceptions of, *inter alia*, how UCL had handled the affair and whether it had affected the public view of UCL. The report arising from this research identified strengths and weaknesses in UCL’s handling of what is acknowledged in the report as ‘an event without

precedent in UK media Higher Education relations' but essentially confirms our impression that UCL dealt with the matter well.

### Data protection issues

- 58 Although this was not part of our formal terms of reference, the panel investigated the background to the events reported in *The Independent* article of 1 April 2010 under the headline 'CIA given details of British Muslim students'. We understand that the circumstances of the release of data pertaining to UCL students or former students were, in summary, as follows. UCLU was contacted by the New Scotland Yard Counter-terrorism Unit (CTU) on 26 December 2009 and asked to provide details of members of UCLU's Islamic societies over the period 2005-09. UCLU's initial response was that the data were protected. The CTU made contact again on 27 December 2009 with a request for the contact details of a number of the current ISoc officers and a personal data release request form, making reference to the Terrorism Act 2006, was received the following day. Although this did not legally oblige UCLU to release the data, it released the name, UCL e-mail address and year of paid society membership for ISoc and RUMS ISoc members 2005-06 to 2008-09 inclusive. Those concerned were informed by UCLU shortly after UCL reopened in the first week of January 2010 that these data had been released. A meeting took place the following week, attended by the UCLU General Manager, UCLU sabbatical student officers, the current ISoc President and representatives of FoSIS, and the police. The CTU representative confirmed at that meeting that the police had asked for the data as part of their investigations concerning Mr Abdulmutallab. It was also confirmed at this meeting that the data could be retained for seven years after the closure of investigations. The CTU indicated subsequently that, as a goodwill gesture, they would be destroying immediately information relating to RUMS ISoc members.
- 59 It is clear that *The Independent* report was inaccurate in a number of respects – for example, when and to whom the police made their initial request for data (the article claims that the ISoc was first approached, on 4 January 2010) and the number of students whose data were involved (the article refers to 'almost 1,000' students – the actual figure was 365, including 180 records which the CTU subsequently destroyed). Nevertheless, the release of these data evidently increased tensions at what was already a naturally sensitive time.

### Conclusion

- 60 As explained above, the inquiry panel has found no evidence to suggest that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was radicalised while at UCL. There is evidence that UCL was, well in advance of the Christmas Day 2009 incident, taking steps to strengthen its student support processes. We welcome the fact that external consultants have recently been engaged by UCL to review the organisation and operation of its student services; we think it may be helpful for our report to be made available to the consultants as they conduct their review. The progress already made in enhancing student support processes, notably through the development of the UCL Personal Tutoring Strategy, should strengthen UCL's arrangements in future for identifying and dealing with students perceived to be at risk. We set out below some specific

recommendations of further action that we think UCL – and the UCL Union, in respect of its arrangements for inviting external speakers to UCLU society events – could usefully take. We hope that these measures, in combination, may reduce the future risk of students being radicalised and increase the university’s ability to identify any students in the process of radicalisation – but they will clearly not eliminate the risk of radicalisation of UCL students. We consider that is an unrealistic aim without changing UCL’s fundamental educational mission and character. .

## Recommendations

61 We recommend as follows:

- that the UCL Union’s process for monitoring invitations to visiting speakers be further reviewed and strengthened (*see paragraph 39*);
- that the UCL Union, in consultation with the UCL authorities, review its criteria for defining the acceptability of prospective visiting speakers (*see paragraph 39*);
- that UCL review its code of practice on freedom of speech in the light of the report of the Universities UK working group which the Provost is chairing (*see paragraph 39*);
- that the UCL Union supply further information to UCL on the number of student society events which do not take place in centrally-bookable locations and then consider, in consultation with the UCL authorities, ways of ensuring that these events are subject to some kind of central scrutiny before they go ahead (*see paragraph 41*);
- that UCL continue to develop a more structured approach to monitoring the operation of student societies operating outside the UCL Union and within individual academic departments (*see paragraph 42*);
- that UCL take action to ensure that its policies and procedures for dealing with and reporting cases of concern about students are not only clearly documented but more effectively communicated (*see paragraph 48*);
- that UCL consider whether there is a need for enhanced training of staff to enable them to be able to deal sympathetically but responsibly with cases of concern about students and increase awareness of the provisions of the Terrorism Acts (*see paragraph 48*);
- that UCL review its understanding of ‘secularity’ in the context of the university’s traditions and principles and against a background of increasing recognition within UK higher education of the need to develop an improved understanding of the language used to deal with faith (*see paragraph 52*);

- that the report and recommendations of the panel be forwarded to the external consultants recently engaged by UCL to conduct a review of the university's student services (*see paragraph 60*).

## Appendix 1

### Bibliography

#### *HM Government*

- 1 *Promoting good campus relations, fostering shared values and preventing violent extremism in Universities and Higher Education Colleges* (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills) (2006)
- 2 *Delivering the Prevent Strategy: an updated guide for local partners* (HM Government) (August 2009)

#### *Academic research*

- 3 *Radicalization in the West: the homegrown threat* (Mitchell D Silber and Arvin Bhatt, New York Police Department Intelligence Division) (2007)
- 4 *Why conventional wisdom on radicalization fails: the persistence of a failed discourse* (Jonathan Githens-Mazer and Robert Lambert, *International Affairs* 86:4) (2010)
- 5 *The dangers of incomplete thought in research, and the perils of translation for counter-terrorism policies* (Jonathan Githens-Mazer and Martino Maggetti, *International Affairs* 86/4) (July 2010)
- 6 *Who becomes a terrorist today?* (Scott Atran, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Volume II, Issue 5) (2008)
- 7 *Jihadi terrorists in Europe - their characteristics and the circumstances in which they joined the jihad: an exploratory study* (Edwin Bakker, Netherlands Institute of International Relations) (December 2006)
- 8 *Paths to global jihad: radicalisation and recruitment to terror networks* (Laila Bokhari, Thomas Hegghammer, Brynjar Lia, Petter Nesser, Truls H Tønnesen, Proceedings from an FFI Seminar) (March 2006)
- 9 *Why are there so many engineers among Islamic radicals?* (Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*) (2009)
- 10 *Homegrown terrorists in the US and UK - an empirical examination of the radicalization process* (Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Laura Grossman, Foundation for the Defense of Democracies) (2009)
- 11 *Recruitment and mobilisation for the Islamist militant movement in Europe* (International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, King's College London) (December 2007)

- 12 *Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalisation in Europe: from conversion to terrorism - an assessment of the factors influencing violent Islamist extremism and suggestions for counter radicalisation measures* (Thomas Precht, Research report funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice) (December 2007)
- 13 *The attempted Christmas Day 2009 attack on Northwest flight 253* (Madeleine Gruen, NEFA Foundation) (May 2010)

*UCL*

- 14 *Code of practice on freedom of speech* (September 2009)
- 15 *UCL Academic Manual – Student Support and Guidance section<sup>3</sup>* (September 2009)
- 16 *Personal Tutoring Strategy* (March 2010)
- 17 *UCL Estates and Facilities Division Security Audit / Review* (2010)

*UCL Union*

- 18 *Health and safety manual* (2006)
- 19 *Money matters* (2006-07)
- 20 *Organising activities and events* (2006-07)
- 21 *Putting on a show* (2006-07)
- 22 *The basics* (2006-07)
- 23 *The sports pages* (2006-07)
- 24 Clubs and societies regulations
- 25 College meeting rooms and outside speaker approval notice

---

<sup>3</sup> This includes, *inter alia*, documents with the following headings: Academic and Pastoral Advice to Students and Student Discipline; Duties of the Dean of Students (Welfare); Duties of the Deputy Dean of Students (Welfare); Duties of the Dean of Students (Academic); Duties of Faculty Tutors; Duties of Departmental Tutors; Role and Responsibilities of Departmental/Divisional Graduate Tutors; Role and Responsibilities of Undergraduate Admissions Tutors; Personal Tutors; Role and Responsibilities of Faculty Graduate Tutors; Adviser to Women Students; Duties of Wardens of Student Residences; The Student Counselling Service; Support Services of University College London; Disciplinary Code and Procedure in respect of Students; Provision of Information to Students; Induction Week; Substance Use and Misuse among Students; Students interrupting their course of study for reasons of ill health or substance abuse; Student Mental Health Policy.

- 26 New club/society affiliation request form and notes for applicants
- 27 UCLU Islamic Society Annual General Meeting minutes (March 2009)
- 28 UCLU Islamic Society Annual General Meeting minutes (March 2010)
- 29 UCLU events and room bookings - external speaker approval process (January 2010)
- 30 UCLU Council minutes (March 2010)
- 31 UCLU – complete list of clubs and societies 2009-10

*Et alia*

- 32 *Countering radicalisation in local communities* (note by the Director of the Ditchley Foundation on a conference held 11-13 February 2010)
- 33 *Survey into journalists' perceptions of the "Christmas Day Bomb Plot" – report of findings* (Echo Global Research, prepared for Dominique Fourniol, Head of UCL Media Relations, June 2010)
- 34 University of Westminster *Religion and belief policy* (May 2005)
- 35 Universities UK academic freedom working group terms of reference (February 2010)
- 36 *Radicalisation: an approach in context* (Yusuf Kaplan, June 2010)
- 37 Letter to Vice Chancellors (Rt Hon Lord Mandelson, 4 February 2010)
- 38 *Not in my front room – no platform policies, a guide for Students' Unions* (National Union of Students, undated)

## **Appendix 2**

### **Persons interviewed by the inquiry panel**

- Mr Mojeed Adams-Mogaji, President, UCLU Islamic Society 2009-10
- Mr Omar Ali, graduate of the UCL Department of Mechanical Engineering
- Mr Ibrahim Al-Tamimy, President, UCLU Islamic Society 2008-09
- Mr Nick Barnard, UCLU Media and Communications Officer 2006-07
- Mr Josh Blacker, UCLU Education Officer 2009-10
- Dr Alvin Blackie, Undergraduate Tutor, UCL Department of Mechanical Engineering
- Dr Noemie Bouhana, Lecturer, UCL Department of Security and Crime Science
- Mr Andrew Caddy, UCLU Finance and Democracy Officer 2009-10
- Ms Nikki Challinger, UCLU Welfare Officer 2009-10
- Professor John Foreman, former UCL Dean of Students
- Mr Dominique Fourniol, Head of Media Relations, UCL
- Mr Alan Gardner, UCLU Media and Communications Officer, 2005-06
- Mr James Hodgson, UCLU Student Activities Officer 2009-10
- Dr Jie Huang, UCL Department of Mechanical Engineering
- Mr Yusuf Kaplan, Chaplain, UCL and Interfaith Adviser, University of Westminster
- Mr James Kariuki, graduate of the UCL Department of Mechanical Engineering
- Mr Qasim Rafiq, graduate of the UCL Department of Mechanical Engineering and President, UCLU Islamic Society 2005-06
- Mr Dave Squires, General Manager, UCL Union
- Mr Robbie Swale, UCLU Clubs, Societies and Student Development Officer 2006-07
- The Rev'd Philippa Turner, Chaplain, UCL Medical School
- The Rev'd Jennifer Welsh, Anglican Chaplain to UCL and Assistant Priest at St Pancras Church, Euston Road
- Mr Dave Weston, Media Relations Manager, UCL
- Dr Adam Wojcik, Admissions Tutor, UCL Department of Mechanical Engineering
- Professor Michael Worton, Vice-Provost (Academic and International)

A further four persons were interviewed but we respect their wish to remain anonymous.

### Appendix 3

#### Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab: chronology

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
September 1993 – July 1999	Student at the Essence International School, Nigeria
August 1999 - May 2005	Student at the British School of Lome, Togo
May 2003	Award of GCSEs
Summer 2004	Represented school in Global Youth Leadership Conference, Washington
May 2005	Award of International Baccalaureate
2004-05 academic year (3 months)	Studied at the San'a Institute for the Arabic Language in Sana'a, Yemen
17 January 2005	Offered place on UCL BEng Engineering with Business Finance
25 July 2005	Acceptance of UCL offer
September 2005	Enrolled at UCL for first year of undergraduate degree programme
2005-06 (academic year)	First year at UCL
2006-07 (academic year)	Second year at UCL President of UCL Islamic Society (ISoc)
January 2007	Organised 'War on Terror' week on behalf of ISoc
2007-08 (academic year)	Third year at UCL
June 2008	Applied for and received from US consulate in London a US multiple-entry visa, valid to 12 June 2010
1 August 2008	Awarded 2:2 degree on completion of BEng at UCL
1-17 August 2008	Visited Houston, Texas
September-December 2008	Understood to have returned home to Nigeria for this time
January 2009	Enrolled at University of Wollongong in Dubai for Master's degree in international business
May 2009	Applied to return to UK; application rejected by UK Border Agency (on immigration grounds rather than for reasons of national security)
July 2009	End of period of study at University of Wollongong
August 2009	Arrived in Yemen to study Arabic at the San'a Institute for the Arabic Language
September 2009	Left San'a Institute, which arranged exit visa and transport to airport (on 21 September). Remained in Yemen; may have attended lectures at Iman University
October 2009	Contacted family, indicating that he wished to discontinue studies in Dubai and instead study <i>sharia</i> and Arabic in Yemen
December 2009	Flew from Yemen to Ethiopia (7 December) then Ghana (9 December) and Lagos (24 December), whence he flew to Detroit <i>via</i> Amsterdam

## Appendix 4

### Key Elements of UCL's New Personal Tutoring Strategy

#### 1. WHO?

- The reporting structure will be Personal Tutor to Departmental Tutor to Faculty Tutor to Dean of Students.
- All academic staff are expected to contribute to the Personal Tutoring scheme.
- Graduate students with appropriate training may also be involved.
- Personal Tutors should remain the same for each student for the duration of their programme of study, **where practical**.

#### 2. WHEN?

- Greater frequency of meetings with Personal Tutors in year 1 with a minimum of 5 formal meetings, of which 3 must be one-to-one, with further opportunities for students to drop in on their Personal Tutor.
- In subsequent years, there should be a minimum of 3 formal meetings per year, with further opportunities for students to drop in on their Personal Tutor.

#### 3. WHAT?

- The purpose of these meetings will be to support learning and to provide pastoral care. This will identify problems and support the development of key skills in all years of study.
- In year 1, there should also be involvement with the Transition Programme, as appropriate.

## Appendix 5

**Summary of UCL's position in relation to key objectives etc in *Promoting good campus relations, fostering shared values and preventing violent extremism in Universities and Higher Education Colleges* (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills) (2006)**

[The text on the left-hand side of the page comprises questions posed in the DIUS document. The text on the right-hand side of the page summarises what the independent inquiry panel understands to be the current position at UCL in relation to each of these points.]

### **Key objectives**

#### **1. To promote and reinforce shared values; to create space for free and open debate; and to listen to and support mainstream voices.**

Is there a clearly publicised, easily available Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech which outlines the university's policies and procedures?

There is a UCL Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

Are you working with the student's union and societies to create and publicise opportunities for students to voice their opinions and engage actively in debate?

The issue is discussed in regular meetings of the UCL Union sabbatical officers, the Provost and senior UCL officers. The issue is also discussed in the Vice-Provost (Academic and International)'s regular meetings with the Education and Campaigns Officer and the Student Activities Officer sabbaticals, and, in the past, in meetings the VP(A&I) has held with the Democracy and Engagement Officer and International Students Executive Officers.

The Union's many affiliated student societies are supported by funding provided through the block grant from UCL. Many hundreds of society events take place each year, and UCL works hard with the Union to ensure that facilities are available for those events at no cost to the organisers. UCL sees the support of societies as being one of the key roles for the Union.

Are you working with the student's union to promote participation in the democratic process and to facilitate opportunities to get involved in the community?

There is an active programme of engagement of students with the local community. One of the key objectives for UCL over the last two years has been the establishment of the Academy in Camden, which will provide further opportunities for engagement for both staff and students.

Do you have regular dialogue with student groups, university chaplains and student union general managers?

Regular meetings with one or more of these groups are held by eg Provost, Vice-Provost (Operations), Dean of Students (Welfare).

**2. To break down segregation amongst different student communities including by supporting inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue and understanding and to engage all students in playing a full and active role in wider engagement with society.**

Have you reviewed your existing policies and procedures to take account of recent relevant legislation set out in Annex C and available guidance and good practice?

Staff: UCL has reviewed its employment policies and procedures in light of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2006, Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003 and Equality Act 2006 and related advice and guidance from the sector's Equality Challenge Unit.

Students: UCL's mechanisms and arrangements for the assessment of any conduct, behaviour or other matters that could bear on a student's academic status, or corresponding procedures for considering academic appeals or complaints by students, and the review of individual cases where appropriate, have been written in accordance with the principles of natural justice and the Human Rights Act. They are reviewed as appropriate or in response to legislative change.

Do your policies specifically address the need to balance the interests of particular cultural or religious groups with those of the wider campus community? Are these policies clearly communicated to staff, students and potential students?

Staff: Employment policies are communicated to staff on arrival at UCL and are available on UCL's web pages. New policies are brought to the attention of all staff. Employment policies do not specifically address the need to balance the interests of particular groups with those of the wider campus community but do stress the importance to UCL of celebrating diversity and inclusiveness and zero tolerance of harassment or discrimination of any kind.

Students: UCL is committed to providing a learning, working and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its members are respected, and which is free from discrimination, prejudice, intimidation and all forms of harassment including bullying. This commitment means that all students of UCL have the right to study or work in an environment free from discrimination, prejudice and all forms of harassment or bullying.

**3. To ensure student safety and campuses that are free from bullying, harassment and intimidation.**

Are your staff and students aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding discrimination, harassment, intimidation, equality and freedom of speech?

Relevant documents available online eg in UCL *Academic Manual* and/or via HR web pages.

Do you have a clear and easily accessible

Relevant documents available online eg in

Equal Opportunities Policy and clear procedures for dealing with complaints and incidents?

*Academic Manual* and/or via HR web pages.

Are staff and students clearly signposted to sources of help in the university, student union and local police?

Information is provided in student handbooks and via departmental web pages.

Do you have an institutional standard of acceptable behaviour setting out zero tolerance to intimidation, bullying, harassment, discrimination, racial hatred or incitement to racial hatred or any forms of incitement to violence or violence itself?

See policy documents referred to above.

#### **4. To provide support for students who may be at risk and appropriate sources of advice and guidance.**

Are your staff appropriately trained to deal with concerns from students?

Staff are not trained specifically to deal with complaints from students but they are trained to deal with complaints and are trained in equality and cultural awareness.

Are staff and students clearly signposted to sources of help in the university, student union and local police?

See above

Are the Chaplaincy services that are available on your campus clearly publicised and easily accessible?

Comments from UCL chaplains interviewed by the panel raise doubts about chaplaincy services are publicised as effectively as they might be. Information currently available online is limited.

#### **5. To ensure that staff and students are aware of their roles in preventing violent extremism.**

Do you have clearly set out policies on use of external speakers?

UCLU has an external speaker approval process and a briefing document for external speakers.

Do you have recently reviewed and clearly set out policies on the use of university premises by outside bodies?

Details are provided on the website and are maintained by the room bookings office.

Do you have mechanisms to ensure that you could act appropriately if university premises were being used for unlawful activity or speech?

Concerns can be raised by staff or students. There are good relationships with the local police, and regular discussion takes place with them over events. UCL does not have experience of concern about the use of premises for unlawful purposes, but there have been a few recent events where there has been concern about the potential for protests at an event leading to disorder. At least one event was cancelled because of concerns about safety, and on other occasions the police have been included in discussions about whether events could safely go ahead, and what safeguards might be required in

	terms of additional security, or police presence.
Do you have clear policies on acceptable use of university facilities including meeting rooms, internet, library books etc.?	Rooms are covered by the policies referred to above. Regulations on computing are clear that facilities must not be used for unlawful purposes or purposes which might bring UCL into disrepute, and set down acceptable standards for example for the use of email. These regulations are drawn to the attention of new staff and students at induction. Library regulations make clear that books should not be vandalised.
Do you have in place the methods to be able to translate any publications or literature being held or distributed on campus into English?	UCL: given the academic resources available locally, there would be no difficulty in obtaining translations quickly if needed. The Vice-Provost (Operations) is not aware that UCL has had any experience of concerning literature being distributed in languages other than English.  UCL Union: literature or publicity officially circulated by UCLU requires approval by either the Democracy & Engagement Officer or the Marketing & Communications Manager and would only be approved in an English language format. Historically and currently UCLU does not provide a translation service and does not provide publicity or distribute literature in languages other than English.

### **'Scenarios and responses' – issues to consider**

#### **Example One – Suspected Extremist Literature On Campus**

Do you have in place procedures to obtain the necessary legal advice where this is needed?	UCL senior officers refer to appropriately qualified legal professionals.
Do you have a reporting mechanism for staff and students to report any concerns within the HE institution? Are the reporting mechanisms clear and understood? Who should decide whether to inform the police? Do they know how to seek advice from local police?	General policy/procedure in place (eg 'whistleblowing' policy on HR web pages) but there is no policy with explicit reference to concerns of this kind.
Do you have the facilities to encourage exploration and debate of the issues raised in this scenario?	Such discussions would take place at eg Provost's Senior Management Team and regular meetings with UCLU sabbatical officers.
What is the local policy on room bookings and contents of posters and meeting flyers?	The term 'local policy' in this context is assumed to mean in relation to departments. Centrally bookable rooms cannot be booked by students, they can only be booked by the UCL Union or by a member of staff, so a 'local' departmental

society not affiliated to the Union can book space only via a departmental administrator or other designated member of staff, and it is made clear to them that they are responsible for the booking. It may be necessary to check that locally controlled space can be booked only via a staff member and that noticeboards are generally managed by an individual.

Does the HE institution have the means of translating foreign language material if necessary?

As above.

### **Example Two – Extremist Speaker Attending University Seminar**

What is the local policy to ensure that the university or college authorities are aware of, and, if appropriate, advise on external speakers with student societies/the students' union?

As described in material received by inquiry panel from UCL Union.

### **Example Three – Inappropriate Student Use Of The Internet**

The HE institution should have a policy on internet use and internet security as staff and students may need to access material of this sort as part of legitimate research. If it is alleged that these policies are breached then what is the process for sensitively investigating allegations, and if necessary who should decide whether to inform the police?

Computing regulations incorporate the acceptable use of UCL's service provider, Ukerna.

### **Example Four – Concerns From Staff and Students About Potential Threats to Their Safety**

Is there a reporting mechanism for staff and students to report any concerns within your institution? Are these clear and understood? Who should decide whether to inform the police? Do they know who to contact for advice from local police?

General policy/procedure in place (eg 'whistleblowing' policy on HR web pages) but no policy with explicit reference to concerns of this kind.

Are there publicly stated policies on intimidation and harassment?

Policies available on UCL HR and UCL Union web pages.

Are anti-bullying policies robustly enforced?

Through policies as above.

Are staff aware of the institution's procedures should a violent incident occur?

Through policies as above.

### **Example Five – Concerns About Potentially Suspicious Group Activity**

Is there a need for a local policy on groups advertised on campus? Could the HE institution work with student societies/students' union to develop one? Should one of the

UCL may wish to explore this further.

student bodies contact the group? Is there a role for an HE provider religious advisor to become involved?

Are the reporting mechanisms for staff clear and understood? Who should decide whether to contact the group, consult student societies or inform the police?

Does the student union have a policy to ensure that university or college societies are open and inclusive?

UCL may wish to explore this further.

Documentation supplied to the panel includes the statement that 'You must ensure that your club or society is open to all students of UCL and work actively to remove any barriers (real or perceived) to students getting involved in your club or society.'

### **Example Six – Use Of University or College Prayer Facilities**

If multi-faith prayer rooms are provided, is there a 'fair use' policy to ensure prayer rooms are seen as a shared resource and accessible by all faiths?

Are there unregulated prayer rooms for different faiths? How should the university or college administration ensure these are accessible by all who want to use them?

Are the reporting mechanisms for staff and students clear and understood?

The 'contemplation/quiet' room is available to persons of any faith or no faith and there is a code of practice for using the room, which is displayed in the room. It is also made clear that this room is available for all UCL members of staff and registered students.

No such facilities exist.

It is not clear what might be 'reported' under this heading.

## Appendix 6

### Key to abbreviations used in the report

CTU	Counter-terrorism Unit
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
FDD	Foundation for the Defense of Democracies
FoSIS	Federation of Student Islamic Societies
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HR	Human Resources
ISoc	(UCL Union) Islamic Society
MPAC UK	Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK
NUS	National Union of Students
NYPD	New York Police Department
RUMS	Royal Free and University College Medical School
UCLU	UCL (Students') Union
VP(A&I)	Vice-Provost (Academic and International)