



Academic Board

Wednesday 1 November 2023¹

MINUTES

Present: Dr Michael Spence, President and Provost (Chair)

Dr Mojtaba Abdi-Jalebi; Jennifer Akinola; Dr Bojan Aleksov; Dr Tamara Alhilfi; Professor Afia Ali; Professor Nazif Alic; Professor Mark Altaweel; Professor Chiara Ambrosio; Dr Jake Anders; Professor Lynn Ang; Professor Kathy Armour; Professor Anasuya Aruliah; Professor Tomaso Aste; Dr Glory Atilola; Professor David Atkinson; Professor David Attwell; Dr Paul Ayris; Professor James Bainbridge; Professor Kathryn Batchelor; Dr Cecile Bats; Professor Beatrice Baudet; Professor Polina Bayvel; Professor Costante Bellettini; Professor Mette Berg; Professor Zoltan Biedermann; Professor Robert Biel; Professor Chris Blackman; Robert Bodden; Professor Jan Boehm; Dr Beate Bohnacker Hellowell; Kate Boldry; Professor Douglas Bourn; Dr Neus Bover Fonts; Professor Annie Britton; Professor Jamie Brown; Professor Rob Brownstone; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Dr Suzy Buckley; Professor Vishwanie Budhram-Mahadeo; Professor Jon Butterworth; Professor Tim Button; Professor Francesca Cacucci; Tadhg Caffrey; Noël Caliste; Professor Benjamin Caplin; Professor Licia Capra; Professor Matteo Carandini; Professor Claire Carmalt; Professor Paola Ceccarelli; Dr Edith Chan; Nidhi Chaudhary; Shaban Chaudhary; Professor Umber Cheema; Dr Evangelia Chrysikou; Professor Olga Ciccarelli; Professor Lucie Clapp; Professor Beverley Clark; Professor Benjamin Clifford; Professor D'Maris Coffman; Dr Alun Coker; Kimberly Cornfield; Dr Sarah Correia; Professor Anna Cox; Professor Ingemar Cox; Professor Mutlu Cukurova; Dr Damian Cummings; Professor Izzat Darwazeh; Dr Jason Davies; Professor Neil Davies; Professor Sally Day; Professor Benedetto de Martino; Professor Jan Derry; Professor Beate Diehl; Dr Duygu Dikicioglu; Professor Jason Dittmer; Professor Annette Dolphin; Dr Megan Donaldson; Dr Alex Donovan; Dr Johanna Donovan; Dominique Draï; Professor Paulo Drinot; Professor Ian Eames; Professor Simon Eaton; Dr Karen Edge; Dr Ian Edwards; Professor Sohier Elneil; Dr Alex Elwick; Dr Emily Emmott; Dr Russell Evans; Professor Susan Evans; Professor Suzanne Farid; Professor Mark Farrant; Professor Ava Fatah; Professor Carina Fearnley; Dr Alexander Fedorec; Professor Corisande Fenwick; Professor Delmiro Fernandez-Reyes; Dr Liory Fern-Pollak; Professor Margot Finn; Professor Abigail Fisher; Dr Andrew Flinn; Dr Richard Freeman; Professor Nicholas Freemantle; Dr Lisa Fridkin; Dr Bettina Friedrich; Professor David Frost; Professor Jonathan Gale; Professor Caroline Garaway; Professor Haidy Geismar; Professor Mark Geller; Professor Dame Hazel Genn; Professor Guido Germano; Hayley Gewer; Professor Alasdair Gibb; Professor Adam Gibson; Professor Derek Gilroy; Polly Glegg; Professor

¹ This meeting was held via videoconference.

Nikolaos Gonis; Dr Hugh Goodacre; Professor Eric Gordy; Professor Lesley Gourlay; Dr Anne Grydehoj; Professor Francois Guesnet; Dr Oliver Haderl; Professor Patrick Haggard; Professor Stephen Hailes; Martin Hall; Rachel Hall; Jesper Hansen; Professor Penelope Haralambidou; Professor Kenneth Harris; Professor John Hartley; Professor Kirsten Harvey; Professor Michael Heinrich; Professor Garrett Hellenthal; Professor Paul Hellier; Elisabeth Herbert; Professor Gavin Hesketh; Professor Mark Hewitson; Professor Evangelos Himonides; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Katherine Holt; Dr Pam Houston; Professor Jie Huang; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Professor Richard Jackman; Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho; Professor Helene Joffe; Professor Philip Jones; Professor Tim Jordan; Professor Lily Kahn; Dr Jens Kandt; Professor Tony Kenyon; Professor Nicoletta Kessar; Professor Maria Kett; Dr Amit Khandelwal; Dr Maki Kimura; Professor James Kirkbride; Professor Josef Kittler; Professor Martin Koltzenburg; Professor Nikolaos Konstantinidis; Professor Andreas Korn; Dr Fiona Kyle; Dr Kata Kyrölä; Dr Danielle Lamb; Dr Sandra Leaton Gray; Professor Alena Ledeneva; Dr Borja Legarra Herrero; Dr Natalie Leow; Professor Paola Lettieri; Professor Rebecca Lever; Professor Tim Levine; Dr Jonathan Lezmy; Amy Lightstone; Professor Christoph Lindner; Dr Kris Lockyear; Dr Helga Lúthersdóttir; Professor Sandy MacRobert; Professor Eleanor Main; Dr Antony Makrinos; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva; Professor Gracia Marin Duran; Professor Louise Marston; Professor Margaret Mayston; Dr Ruth McGinity; Dr Jennifer McGowan; Dr Saladin Meckled-Garcia; Professor Francesca Medda; Dr Clare Melhuish; Professor Jing Meng; Professor Susan Michie; Professor Grant Mills; Professor Zoran Milutinovic; Professor John Mitchell; Professor Mehran Moazen; Professor Richard Mole; Professor Sara Mole; Professor Rear Admiral Neil Morisetti; Dr Guy Moss; Dr Dale Moulding; Dr Vanessa Moulton; Professor Theano Moussouri; Professor Vivek Mudera; Professor Julius Mugwagwa; Professor John Mullan; Professor Steven Murdoch; Professor Mirco Musolesi; Dr Claudia Naeser; Dr Yusra Naqvi; Professor Paul Nathan; Dr Marga Navarrete; Professor Thanh Nguyen; Dr Mengyan Nie; Professor Lorraine Noble; Dr Alex Norori-McCormac; Johanna Novales; Dr Abel Nyamapfene; Professor John O'Keefe; Professor Moses Oketch; Professor John O'Regan; Professor Quentin Pankhurst; Dr Ioannis Papaioannou; Professor Amos Paran; Professor Jenny Parkes; Dr Aaron Parkhurst; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Hiraq Patra; Dr Anne Peasey; Professor Jane Perryman; Professor Justyna Petcke; Professor James Phillips; Professor Franck Pichaud; Sarah Pickering; Professor Hynek Pikhart; Dr Anna Ponomareva; Dr Stephen Potts; Professor Ian Preston; Professor Raman Prinja; Professor David Pym; Professor Stephen Quirke; Professor Slavo Radosevic; Professor Ahad Rahim; Professor Rosalind Raine; Dr Sangaralingam Ramesh; Professor Davide Ravasi; Professor Margaret Rawes; Professor Geraint Rees; Professor Rebecca Rees; Dr Jill Reese; Professor Graeme Reid; Professor Jane Rendell; Professor Andrea Rigon; Professor Carol Rivas; Dr Miguel Rivera; Dr Kate Roach; Professor Aeli Roberts; Professor Helen Roberts; Professor Claire Robins; Dr Jennifer Rode; Dr Igor Rogelja; Professor Caine Rolleston; Professor Rachel Rosen; Professor Karin Ruggaber; Professor Patricia Salinas; Dr Benet Salway; Professor Vieri Samek-Lodovici; Professor Alexander Samson; Dr Andrei Samsonov; Professor Prince Saprai; Professor Federica Sarro; Professor Giorgio Savini; Professor Timothy Scanlon; Professor Stephanie Schorge; Professor Katrina Scior; Professor Eloise Scotford; Professor Toby Seddon; Professor Alwyn Seeds; Professor Andrea Sella; Professor Alessio Serafini; Professor Mala Shah; Professor Lion Shahab; Professor Sonu Shamdasani; Professor Robert Sheil; Dr Miranda Sheild Johansson; Professor

Nicola Shelton; Professor Lorraine Sherr; Dr Victoria Showunmi; Dr Ruth Siddall; Justin Siefker; Professor Angus Silver; Professor Michael Singer; Professor Trevor Smart; Dr Holly Smith; Dr Daphne Sobolev; Professor Christophe Soligo; Professor Samuel Solomon; Professor Eva Sorensen; Professor David Spratt; Professor Judy Stephenson; Professor Vincent Sterk; Professor Sacha Stern; Professor Fiona Stevenson; Professor Michael Stewart; Professor Melvyn Stokes; Professor Sabine Storp; Professor Joshua Stott; Professor Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen; Dr Sherrill Stroschein; Dorota Studniarczyk; Professor Alice Sullivan; Dr Mike Sulu; Dr Bugra Susler; Professor Matthew Sydes; Dr Becky Taylor; Bryan Taylor; Professor Irving Taylor; Professor Giles Thomas; Professor Olga Thomas; Professor Alan Thompson; Professor Estelle Thompson; Professor Ulrich Tiedau; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson; Dr Helen Tsui; Dr Richard Tunwell; Professor Katherine Twamley; Professor Elaine Unterhalter; Professor Gert van der Heijden; Professor Liz Varga; Professor Laura Vaughan; Dr Nalini Vittal; Dr Julia Wagner; Dr Tone Walford; Dr Zachary Walker; Professor Nicola Walshe; Professor David Waters; Professor Li Wei; Professor Finn Werner; Breege Whiten; Professor Amanda Williams; Professor James Wilson; Dr Nick Witham; Professor Nicholas Wood; Michael Wozniak; Professor Dominic Wyse; Dr Punam Yadav; Dr Christine (Xine) Yao; Dr Victoria Yorke-Edwards; Professor Ian Zachary; Professor Fabio Zanasi; Dr Davide Zecchin; Professor Shi Zhou; Professor Nicole Zimmermann; Professor Stan Zochowski.

In attendance: Karen Barnard; Aimie Chapple; Professor Parama Chaudhury; Paul Clark; Donna Dalrymple; Rebecca Edwards; Dr Clare Goudy; Ed Hossack; Samantha Lancet-Grant; Natasha Lewis; Nick McGhee; Turlogh O'Brien; David Pacey; Professor Enrico Palandri; Andy Smith; Kirsty Walker; Olivia Whiteley; Dr Kathryn Woods.

Part I: Preliminary Business

1 ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES

1.1 The minutes of the meeting of 5 July 2023 [AB Minutes 58-63, 2022-23] were confirmed.

2 MATTERS ARISING (Paper 1-01)

2.1 AB noted the update.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

3 PROVOST'S REPORT (Paper 1-02)

3.1 AB noted the report.

4 **DISCIPLINARY PROVISIONS – UPDATE** (Paper 1-03)

- 4.1 In the Strategic Plan 2022-27 UCL had committed to a programme of work to ensure consistency and alignment in UCL’s disciplinary processes. This commitment reflected widespread unease across the sector about the approach to addressing allegations of sexual misconduct, harassment and bullying, as well as more specific concerns within the UCL community about elements of UCL’s own practices, notably the extended timescales of many formal processes.
- 4.2 As a first step, UMC was establishing a task and finish group for which Academic Board had been invited to provide two nominees. The group was charged with reviewing disciplinary procedures and practices, including a stakeholder engagement process, and making recommendations for improvement. Any recommendations involving changes to procedures would be subject to a full consultation process with the UCL community, including Academic Board and the campus trade unions.
- 4.3 The following matters were raised in the course of the discussion:
- a) Members debated the constitution of the group, noting in particular: the absence of any requirement for members with expertise in gender, race, or disability, or of representation of the campus trade unions; the preponderance of non-academic staff; and the lack of places for AB members who did not have expertise in employment law or fields related to the questions under consideration. AB was reminded of the stakeholder engagement element of the process, both in terms of the way the group would gather feedback from the community, and subsequent consultation on any proposed changes to procedures.
 - b) Members queried the nomenclature ‘task and finish group’. This was a term generally used for bodies with a finite remit leading to a particular outcome; it was not intended to indicate that the group itself had responsibility to ‘finish’ the process in terms of determining changes to procedures.
 - c) Members highlighted their concern for academic freedom in the context of the potential for disciplinary procedures to be weaponised. It was suggested that the references to Statute 18 in the paper implied that the amendment of the Statute was an aim of the group; this was inconsistent with the characterisation of its role as a neutral one involving stakeholder engagement and making recommendations on that basis.
 - d) One potential outcome was a recommendation that Regulations be created to govern the operation of disciplinary procedures. Statute 18 itself however included some procedural detail. Notably, the requirement that an external member of Council be included on any tribunal (Statute 18(16)) had a potential impact on the timescales for the completion of procedures.
 - e) AB discussed the role and timing of an Academic Impact Statement. It was suggested that an impact statement could not be drafted in advance of any proposals being developed. Members highlighted however the

advantages of early consultation in avoiding misunderstanding and the value of that dialogue as the process moved forward.

- 4.4 Academic Board confirmed that its concerns related not to the principle of reviewing UCL's disciplinary procedures overall, but to particular aspects of the proposals as outlined above. The Provost confirmed that the Terms of Reference of the task and finish group would be revised to exclude any reference specifically to Statute 18, but recognising that the group would consider practices across the institutional disciplinary procedures. The constitution of the group would be reviewed in light of the foregoing discussion. Academic Board would be advised of the outcome of that process.

5 PROPOSAL FOR STANDING WORKING GROUP OF ACADEMIC BOARD (Paper 1-04)

- 5.1 AB considered a proposal that a Standing Working Group be created to advise the Board on staff rights, including on redundancies, disciplinary processes, and academic freedom, covered by Statute 18. The establishment of the working group was not contingent on the outcome of the preceding discussion (Minute 4) although it would have a role to play if any proposals on changes to Statute 18 were to emerge from that process. It was noted that the group was also likely to consider the question of whether Statute 18 should be extended to wider staff groups engaged in academic work.
- 5.2 In the context of recent government statements with a bearing on matters of academic freedom, members suggested that there was value in having a group in place as a resource to be called on were any issues to arise at short notice.
- 5.3 Academic Board approved the establishment of a Working Group on Statute 18. GCAB would seek volunteers and arrange for ballots to be held where necessary. AB noted the need for the Working Group to work effectively with the Task and Finish Group (Minute 4).

6 NSS, APF, TEF, GRADUATE OUTCOMES SURVEY AND EDUCATION EXCELLENCE STATEMENT (Paper 1-05)

- 6.1 AB received a presentation on the outcome of the TEF 2023. UCL's strengths included new learning resources, rates of continuation and completion, and approaches to employability. AB noted however the weak performance in the student experience areas of 'Teaching, Assessment & Feedback' and 'Learning Environment & Academic Support'. A particular issue in this respect was a high level of variation between subject areas and demographic groups, as this failed to meet the TEF expectation of a consistent student experience.
- 6.2 UCL's performance in the Graduate Outcomes Survey was generally strong, but there was nevertheless a risk associated with the undergraduate unemployment rate, where UCL placed 22nd in the Russell Group. To address this, a mandated exit survey was being introduced; this would facilitate the

delivery of more targeted support to those students most in a position to benefit.

- 6.3 There had been significant changes to the methodology of the NSS in 2023, including the discontinuation of the overall satisfaction question. Although this precluded direct comparisons of raw scores with previous years, benchmarking against the rest of the sector was still possible. UCL continued to perform poorly on the assessment and feedback question. There was wide variation on this metric across the institution and even within faculties, with pockets of excellence across the University. UCL's position had also fallen since 2022 on learning opportunities. Although it was acknowledged that there were external impacts (such as covid) to be accounted for, these affected the whole sector, and the concern was in respect of UCL's benchmarking against its competitors. Further, the general conclusions arising out of the internal Annual Programme Survey were broadly consistent with those of the NSS.
- 6.4 Action on assessment and feedback was being prioritised with additional support offered in the lowest scoring subject areas. These programmes of work could helpfully be communicated to students, and their effectiveness tested, through the Continuous Module Dialogue (CMD) process introduced in 2022/23. It was noted that UCL's four-week turnaround time for marks was longer than most institutions. Modules assessed only by way of one final exam were also an issue, as no feedback was given at an earlier stage.
- 6.5 Members enquired after the feasibility of discerning the impact of a range of individual factors within the data, including the level of administrative support on a programme, or potential bias in feedback. There was no discernible correlation between level of administrative support for teaching and the scores on this metric, although it was noted that UCL's expenditure on teaching administration at an institutional level was high. On the question of bias in feedback, the CMD process had been introduced partly to address concerns about potential for bias in end of module questionnaires. There was little variation in NSS feedback between different cohorts of students.

7 **EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT 2022-23** (Paper 1-06)

- 7.1 AB noted the very wide range of activity covered by EdCom over the past year.
- 7.2 As the meeting was running out of time, the report would be brought back to the next meeting of AB.

Part III: Other business for approval or information

8 **ACADEMIC BOARD MEMBERSHIP: TERM 1 2023-24** (Paper 1-07)

- 8.1 Noted.

9 **MEMBERSHIP OF GCAB AND EXCOMAB** (Paper 1-08)

9.1 Academic Board approved the proposal to invite Professor Ralf Schoepfer and Dr Martin Fry to act as external experts advising GCAB for the academic year 2023-24, pursuant to Standing Orders 13.v.f, 13.vii.f and 13.vii.i.

10 **NOMINATION FROM GCAB** (Paper 1-09)

10.1 Noted.

11 **ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHAIR** (Paper 1-10)

11.1 Noted.

12 **OFFICE FOR STUDENTS BUSINESS PLAN** (Paper 1-11)

12.1 Noted.

13 **MINUTES OF OTHER COMMITTEES** (Paper 1-12)

13.1 Noted.

14 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

14.1 Wednesday 7 February 2024 at 2-4pm.

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