



Academic Board

Wednesday 3 November 2021¹

MINUTES

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

Dr Ali Abolfathi, Professor Ibrahim Abubakar, Mr James Agar, Professor Daniel Alexander, Mr Adnan Ali, Professor Lynn Ang, Dr Seth Anziska, Dr Manuel Arroyo-Kalin, Professor Jonathan Ashmore, Professor David Atkinson, Professor David Attwell, Professor Jan Axmacher, Dr Sakiru Badmos, Professor Maryse Bailly, Professor Angus Bain, Professor James Bainbridge, Professor Gianluca Baio, Dr Emily Baker, Professor Ramanarayanan Balachandran, Professor Torsten Baldeweg, Professor Amitava Banerjee, Professor Yolande Barnes, Dr Cecile Bats, Professor Costante Bellettini, Mr Ayman Benmati, Professor Mette Berg, Professor Michael Berkowitz, Professor Jeff Bezemer, Professor Zoltan Biedermann, Professor Robert Biel, Professor Stephanie Bird, Professor Brad Blitz, Professor David Bogle, Professor Iain Borden, Professor Noemie Bouhana, Professor Rachel Bowlby, Professor Alice Bradbury, Professor Annie Britton, Professor Geraldine Brodie, Professor Clare Brooks, Dr Nicole Brown, Professor Stella Bruzzi, Dr Suzy Buckley, Professor Vishwanie Budhram-Mahadeo, Professor Helene Burningham, Professor Jonathan Butterworth, Professor Fabio Caccioli, Mr Tadhg Caffrey, Professor Claire Cameron, Professor Nauro Campos, Professor Licia Capra, Dr Velia Cardin, Dr Alisia Carnemolla, Dr Declan Chard, Professor Elaine Chase, Professor Joanna Chataway, Professor Michael Cheetham, Professor Tao Cheng, Professor Kwang Choy, Dr Evangelia Chrysikou, Professor Chris Clack, Professor Beverley Clark, Dr Alun Coker, Professor Timothy Colbourn, Professor Susan Collins, Professor Nora Colton, Professor Barbara Conradt, Professor Marc-Olivier Coppens, Professor Anna Cox, Ms Sonja Curtis, Dr Maria D'Argenio, Professor Izzat Darwazeh, Professor Sally Day, Professor Robertus De Bruin, Professor Rohan de Silva, Professor Zongyi Deng, Professor Janice Derry, Professor Andrew Dick, Professor Harry Dimitriou, Professor Snezana Djordjevic, Professor Annette Dolphin, Professor Sandra Dunsmuir, Professor Ian Eames, Professor Frances Edwards, Professor Piet Eeckhout, Professor Susan Evans, Professor Joanna Evans, Ms Pascale Fanning-Tichborne, Ms Ava Fatah, Professor Federico Federici, Dr Javier Fernandez Garcia, Professor Delmiro Fernandez-Reyes, Professor Patrizia Ferretti, Professor Andrew Fisher, Professor Maria Fitzgerald, Mr James Ford, Professor Stuart Foster, Professor Eric Fraga, Dr Bettina Friedrich, Dr Martin Fry, Professor Tatiana Fumasoli, Professor Simon Gaisford, Professor Jonathan Gale, Dr Federico Galvanin, Professor Haidy Geismar, Professor Dame Hazel Genn, Professor Alasdair Gibb, Professor Adam Gibson, Professor Deborah Gill, Professor Faye

¹ This meeting was held via videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

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Gishen, Dr Hugh Goodacre, Professor Eric Gordy, Professor Lesley Gourlay, Ms Emma Grant, Dr Anne Grydehøj, Professor Francois Guesnet, Professor David Guile, Dr Lucia Patrizio Gunning, Professor Patrick Haggard, Professor Stephen Hailes, Professor Muki Haklay, Mr Martin Hall, Mr Jesper Hansen, Professor Stephen Hart, Professor Adham Hashibon, Professor Michael Heinrich, Dr Ulrike Heuer, Professor Mark Hewitson, Professor Evangelos Himonides, Professor Aroon Hingorani, Professor Michael Hoare, Dr Christine Hoffmann, Professor Arne Hofmann, Professor Andrew Hudson-Smith, Professor John Hyman, Professor Richard Jackman, Professor Dan Jagger, Professor Kathryn Jeffery, Professor Helene Joffe, Ms Liz Jones, Professor Tim Jordan, Dr Thomas Kador, Dr Jens Kandt, Professor Jian Kang, Professor Catherine Keen, Dr John Kelsey, Professor Nicoletta Kessarlis, Dr Maki Kimura, Professor Jeffrey King, Professor Josef Kittler, Professor Robert Kleta, Professor Jonathan Knowles, Dr Efrosyni Konstantinou, Ms Edyta Kostanek, Mr Dimitrios Kraniotis, Dr Fiona Kyle, Professor Mark Lake, Dr Danielle Lamb, Professor Nick Lane, Professor Alena Ledeneva, Professor Louis Lemieux, Professor Paola Lettieri, Professor Caren Levy, Professor Li Wei, Professor Christoph Lindner, Professor Claire Lindsay, Professor Allison Littlejohn, Professor Vladimir Litvak, Professor Chaozong Liu, Professor Alison Lloyd, Professor Annemaree Lloyd-Zantiotis, Professor David Lomas, Professor Paula Lorgelly, Dr Helga Lúthersdóttir, Professor Ruth Mace, Dr Isabel Mackay, Professor Sandy MacRobert, Professor Claudio De Magalhaes, Dr Merle Mahon, Ms Blathnaid Mahony, Professor Eleanor Main, Ms Viktória Makai, Professor Chloe Marshall, Professor Deborah Martin, Professor John Martin, Professor Manolis Mavrikis, Dr Margaret Mayston, Dr Luca Mazzei, Professor Carolyn McGettigan, Dr Ruth McGinity, Dr Saladin Meckled-Garcia, Professor Francesca Medda, Professor Nils Metternich, Professor Stanimira Milcheva, Ms Angharad Milenkovic, Professor Grant Mills, Professor Mark Miodownik, Professor Sara Mole, Ms Joanne Moles, Professor Rear Admiral Neil Morisetti, Professor Gemma Moss, Professor Richard Mott, Professor Vivek Mudera, Professor Steven Murdoch, Professor Florian Mussgnug, Ms Marga Navarrete, Dr Helene Neveu Kringsbach, Dr Will Newton, Professor Thanh Nguyen, Professor Nikolitsa Nomikou, Dr Abel Nyamapfene, Dr Ademola Odunsi, Professor Moses Oketch, Professor Martin Oliver, Professor John O'Regan, Mr Derfel Owen, Professor Norbert Pachler, Professor Mathew Page, Professor Enrico Palandri, Professor Ioannis Papakonstantinou, Professor Amos Paran, Professor Jenny Parkes, Professor Ivan Parkin, Professor Nora Pashayan, Professor Sandip Patel, Dr Thomas Peach, Professor Paola Pedarzani, Professor Ann Phoenix, Professor Franck Pichaud, Professor Hynek Pikhart, Professor Helene Plun-Favreau, Dr Michaela Pollock, Professor John Potter, Professor David Pym, Professor Stephen Quirke, Professor Rosalind Raine, Dr Joana Ramalho, Professor Margaret Rawes, Professor Geraint Rees, Professor Jane Rendell, Professor Antonella Riccio, Professor Mary Richardson, Professor Carol Rivas, Professor Aeli Roberts, Professor Helen Roberts, Professor Oliver Robinson, Dr Tristan Robinson, Professor Caine Rolleston, Dr Flaminia Ronca, Professor Sasha Roseneil, Mr Mike Rowson, Professor Dmitri Rusakov, Professor Michele Russell, Ms Fiona Ryland, Professor John Sabapathy, Professor Patricia Salinas, Dr Benet Salway, Professor Christoph Salzmann, Professor Prince Saprai, Professor Ralf Schoepfer, Professor Stephanie Schorge, Professor Katrina Scior, Professor Eloise Scottford, Professor Toby Seddon, Professor David Selwood, Professor Lucy Serpell, Professor Lion Shahab, Professor Maryam Shahmanesh, Professor Sonu Shamdasani, Professor David Shanks, Dr Ala'a Shehabi, Professor Nicola Shelton, Professor Elizabeth

Shepherd, Dr Ruth Siddall, Professor Nadia Sidorova, Mr Justin Siefker, Professor Bill Sillar, Professor Ricardo Silva, Professor Angus Silver, Dr Samuel Sims, Professor Michael Singer, Professor Lucia Sivilotti, Professor Trevor Smart, Professor Sam Smidt, Professor Anthony Smith, Professor Kenneth Smith, Professor Alan Sokal, Professor Eva Sorensen, Professor David Spratt, Professor Kaila Srail, Professor Michael Stacey, Professor Andrew Stahl, Professor Claudio Stern, Professor Sacha Stern, Professor Michael Stewart, Dr Sherrill Stroschein, Ms Joanna Stroud, Professor Judith Suissa, Dr Mike Sulu, Dr Bugra Susler, Professor Ilias Tachtsidis, Mr Bryan Taylor, Professor Francesco Saverio Tedesco, Professor Cheryl Thomas, Professor Geraint Thomas, Professor Giles Thomas, Professor Mark Thomas, Professor Alan Thompson, Professor Julian Thompson, Professor Jon Thomson, Professor Ulrich Tiedau, Dr Matteo Tiratelli, Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker, Professor Helena Titheridge, Professor Pavel Tolar, Professor Kin-Fai Tong, Professor Ahmed Toosy, Mr Martyn Towner, Ms Helen Tsui, Professor Patric Turowski, Professor Liz Varga, Mr Clive Vassell, Professor Laura Vaughan, Dr Nalini Vittal, Dr Bella Vivat, Professor Ann Walker, Ms Yasmin Walker, Professor Michael Walls, Professor Nicola Walshe, Professor Johanna Waters, Ms Breege Whiten, Professor Duncan Wilson, Professor James Wilson, Professor Graham Worth, Professor Selina Wray, Ms Tor Wright, Dr Sophie Zadeh, Dr Vedran Zerjav, Professor Stan Zochowski, Professor Alimuddin Zumla.

In attendance: Dr Clare Goudy, Ms Natasha Lewis, Mr Nick McGhee (Secretary to Academic Board), Ms Olivia Whiteley.

Apologies: Professor Kathryn Batchelor, Dr Matthew Blain, Professor Ana Ferreira, Dr Claire Garnett, Professor John Gray, Professor Kirsten Hansen, Dr Quentin Huys-Gavric, Professor Lily Kahn, Professor Sir Peng Khaw, Professor Susanne Kuechler, Professor Jonathan Ledermann, Professor Xi Liang, Professor Gary Lye, Professor Frederic Malherbe, Professor Gesine Manuwald, Professor Usha Menon, Professor Lorraine Noble, Dr Stephen Potts, Professor David Price, Professor Kathy Pritchard-Jones, Ms Maria Sibiryakova, Professor Jolene Skordis, Professor Joy Sleeman, Professor Sarah Spurgeon, Dr Amy Thornton, Dr Eleanor Tillett, Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson, Professor Georgios Tsakos, Professor Sarah Walker.

Part I: Preliminary Formal Business

1 ACADEMIC BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE, CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP, STANDING ORDERS 2021-22 (Paper 1-01)

1.1 The Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership, and Standing Orders for 2021-22 were noted. The Provost welcomed new members of Academic Board to their first meeting.

2 TERMS OF REFERENCE OF OTHER COMMITTEES (Paper 1-02)

2.1 Noted.

3 ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES

- 3.1 The minutes of the AB meeting of 2 June 2021 [AB Minutes 57-63, 2020-21] were confirmed.
- 3.2 The minutes of the Special AB meeting of 15 July 2021 [AB Minute 64, 2020-21] were confirmed.
- 3.3 A member noted that the minutes had recorded a request for an updated organogram of the relationship between UMC and other committees. The Provost confirmed that this would be provided in due course.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

4 PROVOST'S REPORT (Paper 1-03)

- 4.1 In respect of the return to campus in the context of the pandemic, members expressed concern about how effectively UCL's intended safety measures were being communicated and delivered. A member reported finding windows in teaching spaces closed after previous teaching sessions, in contravention of the requirement that in naturally ventilated rooms windows must be kept open, and that signage on this requirement was not always evident. The Vice-President (Operations) said that she would liaise with the relevant Estates colleagues on the issue².
- 4.2 In respect of the science informing these measures, it was confirmed that UCL's approach had been approved by UCL's Public Health Advisory Panel³. Teaching spaces were being prioritised for the roll-out of CO2 monitors. It was suggested that the vital role of regular lateral flow testing for UCL's response could be given more prominence in communications on the issue.

5 UCL STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-27: CONSULTATION (Paper 1-04)

- 5.1 Academic Board discussed the papers *Our Mission, Vision and Values* and *UCL Now*, together with the overview document of the consultation process.

² Estates staff subsequently confirmed that all central teaching rooms should now have instructions in them relating to the use of natural ventilation. If this is found not to be the case the Estates Helpdesk should be contacted and this will be addressed as a matter of urgency. In some situations (late in the day) the security team have been instructed to close windows. A note to Heads of Department would be issued shortly.

³ Details at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/coronavirus/information-ucl-staff/ucls-planning-and-response>

- 5.2 Members noted the approach taken in the paper to the question of the balance between the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and the solution-focussed, mostly interdisciplinary research carried out on questions posed by our community. It was noted that there was no reference in the papers to the concept of scholarship, and it was suggested that this potentially reflected a relatively narrow view of research informed primarily by a focus on scientific inquiry, the consequence of which was an overemphasis on a utilitarian approach. It was not always clear at the point of engaging in research how utilitarian that research would turn out to be. The Provost noted that the importance of thematic and problem-based research was highlighted in UCL2034, but acknowledged Academic Board's concern that the paper should adequately reflect the function of a university as a space for undirected thinking and creativity.
- 5.3 In response to a suggestion that the document's pragmatic approach meant that it missed the opportunity to deliver a statement about the nature of the university and of UCL, the Provost gave his view that such a statement was already to be found in the vision and mission statement of UCL 2034. One member offered a suggestion that the nature of a university was to develop and teach high-quality, novel ideas. The Provost acknowledged this as an alternative vision and mission and noted that such ideas were welcomed through the current process. Members were invited to submit any such thoughts in writing.
- 5.4 The identification and expression of values was inherently difficult, and there were many possible sets of values that could be decided on. Those identified in the paper were the values that the Provost has heard an institutional commitment to during his first ten months, but there was still scope for these to be changed in response to feedback from members.
- 5.5 Members enquired whether, in enumerating the complexities of UCL, the paper implicitly oriented the discussion towards goals which implied increased centralisation. It was suggested that there would be value in holding an institutional conversation about what activity should be centralised and what should be local. The Provost noted that there was no reference to centralisation in the papers, and that this was not a necessary consequence of the pursuit of simplification. He acknowledged AB's note of caution about oversimplistic solutions to complexity.
- 5.6 It was suggested that the bespoke level of educational provision for each student enabled by UCL's complex module offering⁴ was an important element of UCL's distinctive educational experience. Reducing module numbers would be inimical to the fostering of interdisciplinary work and to the natural academic rejuvenation necessary in the context of broadening fields of enquiry. It was suggested that the diversity of unique degree pathways at UCL was effectively managed by programme-level control of the recommended

⁴ It was unclear whether the figure of 5,779 modules cited in the paper related to active modules or all modules. It was subsequently confirmed that this figure related to the number of modules with students registered.

options. The Provost noted that the issue of identifying the educationally optimal level of choice for students was an important question with significant implications for other activity impacting on staff workload, notably timetabling and assessment. Student choice was not just a matter of modules but also of flexibility in teaching and assessment. The Provost noted AB's caution about the risk of undervaluing student choice and the dynamic creativity that can be driven by that choice.

- 5.7 Members queried whether the discussion about size and shape, which was planned for the later stages of the consultation process, would not be better taken earlier. The Provost was of the view that the concerns expressed in the meeting demonstrated why that discussion needed to happen last. UCL was a student-fee funded organisation, as it lacked any significant endowment, but not all educational activity made a return. In the past, a general assumption that growth was necessary in order to fund activity had prevented sufficient attention being paid to the margins on different kinds of teaching activity. Analysis of the nature of that return was currently being tested for robustness, and the results would be shared with AB in due course. It was the Provost's view that, once the institution had described its academic vision, it should turn to the question of the investment needed to pay for it, which in turn would have implications for the constitution of UCL's student body. If those implications were unpalatable it would be necessary to return to the vision question as an iterative process. To reverse the order of those conversations would be to risk allowing the academic conversation to be driven by the financial one. Nevertheless, the Provost acknowledged that there might be scope for bringing forward the size and shape discussion without permitting it to become the driving logic behind the process.
- 5.8 AB discussed the question of barriers to staff in carrying out their work. This would be reflected in the sixth consultation paper, *Enablers*. The Provost identified undue complexity as one such barrier, exemplified by the lack of individual accountability for end-to-end process delivery. It was suggested that care should be taken in respect of the tone of the paper with reference to the role of professional services staff.
- 5.9 Members discussed whether the ecological crisis was sufficiently strongly reflected in the draft, with some feeling that a far more radical approach was appropriate. In particular it was noted that a business model relying on attracting overseas students to London may not sit comfortably with a zero carbon commitment, and that this raised questions about the future of online teaching delivery. The Provost noted that in the next stage of the consultation the discussion would address areas of focus and educational priorities and the implications of such priorities for research investment and teaching as well as for institutional life. No responsible university could operate without considering the ecological crisis or, in his view, the growing levels of inequality in the UK. This in turn carried implications for thinking about the admissions policy, and how that affected decisions about the size and shape of the student body.

6 ACADEMIC IMPACT STATEMENTS TEMPLATE (Paper 1-05)

- 6.1 Professor Patrick Haggard, member of GCAB and ExComAB, introduced the paper. The proposal to introduce academic impact statements had been made in the report of the Commission of Inquiry [AB Minute 51, 2019-20]. The Academic Board Executive Committee (ExComAB), which would be the forum for discussion and feedback on such statements, had held useful discussions with the Vice-President (Operations) to consider how this might work. As almost any initiative in a university context would have some sort of academic implications, it was not yet clear what criteria could be used to determine which new developments would require an impact assessment. One possible solution was that it would be required as part of any business case.
- 6.2 The form was not intended to be bureaucratic but to provide a retrievable record of matters considered in reaching a particular decision, and to act as a mechanism for ensuring the input of ExComAB in identifying the relevant stakeholders on any given issue.
- 6.3 The Provost noted that the need to introduce this process suggested the need for a fundamental shift of culture. It was to be hoped that such a change would in time make the form itself unnecessary, although some members felt that there would be an ongoing benefit even once this approach was embedded in common practice.
- 6.4 AB discussed whether it would be useful for the template to request information on the way in which the proposed initiative interacted with the institutional values identified in the strategy discussions, as well as whether the academic impact statements should be combined with the equality impact assessments, proposals for which were currently being developed. Differing views were expressed, with some members calling attention to the contribution academic impact statements could be expected to make in enabling Academic Board to meet its constitutional responsibility to consider and advise Council on academic matters. It was agreed that the question would be taken back to ExComAB, but that the introduction of the academic impact statement should not be delayed by the fact that the process for developing the equality impact assessments was still in process.
- 6.5 Recent changes to the travel policy were cited as an example of an initiative that would have benefitted from an academic impact statement. There were differing views on the nature and effectiveness of the consultation process carried out in that case.
- 6.6 Members were invited to submit any further comments on the form to Professor Haggard.

7 ACADEMIC BOARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP (Paper 1-06)

- 7.1 Professor Ralf Schoepfer, chair of GCAB and ExComAB, introduced the item.

- 7.2 ExComAB had been established when AB adopted the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. In order not to delay the start of work, the temporary arrangement had been that its membership would initially be that of GCAB, but it had been agreed that this would transition to a devolved arrangement within two years. At the end of its first year it was proposed that the membership be partially devolved as set out in the paper. Elections would be required if the change was approved.
- 7.3 The Provost noted that the Chair of AB might normally be expected to be a member of ExComAB.
- 7.4 Academic Board approved the proposed temporary amendment to the ExComAB constitution. A call for nominations would be issued shortly.

Part III: Other Business for approval or Information

8 WORKING GROUP ON THE DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM (Paper 1-08)

8.1 Noted.

9 CODE OF PRACTICE ON FREE SPEECH (Paper 1-09)

9.1 Noted.

10 ACADEMIC UNITS (Paper 1-10)

10.1 Noted.

11 SUSPENSION AND EXCLUSION OF STUDENTS (Paper 1-11)

11.1 Noted.

12 MINUTES OF OTHER COMMITTEES (Paper 1-12)

12.1 Noted.

13 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

13.1 An additional meeting⁵ would be arranged later in this term for discussion of UCL's membership of Stonewall.

13.2 Meetings would be held in the spring term as follows:

- **Wednesday 26 January 2022, 14:05-16:00**
- **Wednesday 9 February 2022, 14:05-16:00**
- **Tuesday 15 March 2022, 14:05-16:00**

⁵ Subsequently confirmed for Friday 10th December 2021, 13:05-14:45.