

**Academic Board****Tuesday 13 September 2022¹****MINUTES****Present:** Dr Michael Spence, President and Provost (Chair).

Dr Ali Abolfathi; Mr Adnan Ali; Professor Lynn Ang; Dr Seth Anziska; Professor Valentina Arena; Professor Kathleen Armour; Professor David Attwell; Professor Jan Axmacher; Dr Paul Ayris; Professor Gianluca Baio; Professor Torsten Baldeweg; Professor Simon Banks; Professor Kathryn Batchelor; Dr Cecile Bats; Professor Michael Berkowitz; Professor Robert Biel; Professor Stephanie Bird; Professor Chris Blackman; Professor Douglas Bourn; Professor Annie Britton; Professor Geraldine Brodie; Professor Clare Brooks; Professor Eric Brunner; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Dr Suzy Buckley; Professor Vishwanie Budhram-Mahadeo; Professor Jonathan Butterworth; Dr Tim Button; Mr Tadhg Caffrey; Dr Jelena Calic; Professor Licia Capra; Dr Velia Cardin; Professor Tom Carlson; Professor Claire Carmalt; Dr Alisia Carnemolla; Professor Richard Chandler; Dr Declan Chard; Ms Andrey Chau; Professor Parama Chaudhury; Professor Michael Cheetham; Dr Evangelia Chrysikou; Professor Lucie Clapp; Professor Beverley Clark; Mr Paul Clark; Dr Alun Coker; Professor Susan Collins; Professor Marc-Olivier Coppens; Professor Anthony Costello; Ms Sarah Cows; Professor Anna Cox; Dr Sebastian Coxon; Ms Sonja Curtis; Professor Naomi Dale; Ms Donna Dalrymple; Dr Maria D'Argenio; Professor Nathan Davies; Professor Sally Day; Professor Dina D'Ayala; Professor Robertus De Bruin; Professor Andreas Demosthenous; Professor Spiros Denaxas; Professor Janice Derry; Professor Jason Dittmer; Ms Dominique Draï; Professor Paulo Drinot; Professor Sandra Dunsmuir; Professor Ian Eames; Ms Pascale Fanning-Tichborne; Ms Ava Fatah; Professor Delmiro Fernandez-Reyes; Professor Andrew Fisher; Mr James Ford; Professor Murray Fraser; Professor Nicholas Freemantle; Dr David Frost; Dr Martin Fry; Professor Mary Fulbrook; Professor Jonathan Gale; Dr Federico Galvanin; Professor Caroline Garaway; Dr Claire Garnett; Professor Guido Germano; Professor Alasdair Gibb; Professor Shirli Gilbert; Dr Hugh Goodacre; Professor Eric Gordy; Ms Emma Grant; Professor Lewis Griffin; Professor Ann Griffin; Dr Anne Grydehøj; Professor François Guesnet; Professor Helen Hackett; Professor Patrick Haggard; Professor Stephen Hailes; Professor Penelope Haralambidou; Professor Kirsten Harvey; Professor Adham Hashibon; Professor Michael Heinrich; Dr Ulrike Heuer; Professor Mark Hewitson; Professor Zelee Hill; Professor Evangelos Himonides; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Martin Holbraad; Professor Katherine Holt; Professor Andrew Hudson-Smith; Professor Helene Joffe; Professor Vivienne Jones; Professor Philip Jones; Ms Liz Jones;

¹ This meeting was held via videoconference.

Professor Lily Kahn; Professor Mark Calderon; Dr John Kelsey; Dr Maki Kimura; Professor Josef Kittler; Professor Hannah Knox; Ms Edyta Kostanek; Dr Ghita Kouadri Mostefaoui; Professor Amy Kulper; Dr Fiona Kyle; Dr Danielle Lamb; Professor Diana Laurillard; Professor Alena Ledeneva; Professor Paola Lettieri; Professor Rebecca Lever; Professor Caren Levy; Professor Christoph Lindner; Professor Allison Littlejohn; Professor Alison Lloyd; Dr Helga Lúthersdóttir; Professor Gary Lye; Professor Ruth Mace; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Professor Eleanor Main; Professor Deborah Martin; Professor John Martin; Professor Sarah Matthews; Dr Margaret Mayston; Dr Claire McAndrew; Professor Anne McMunn; Dr Saladin Meckled-Garcia; Professor Nils Metternich; Professor Stanimira Milcheva; Ms Angharad Milenkovic; Professor Neil Millar; Professor Grant Mills; Professor Robert Mills; Professor Sara Mole; Dr Dafne Zuleima Morgado Ramirez; Professor Ruth Morgan; Professor Rear Admiral Neil Morisetti; Professor Sharon Morris; Professor Gemma Moss; Professor Vivek Mudera; Professor Steven Murdoch; Professor Mirco Musolesi; Professor Florian Mussgnug; Ms Marga Navarrete; Dr Mark Newman; Professor Thanh Nguyen; Professor Mignon Nixon; Professor Moses Oketch; Professor Martin Oliver; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Ioannis Papakonstantinou; Professor Jayne Parker; Professor Nora Pashayan; Dr Lucia Patrizio Gunning; Dr Thomas Peach; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Jane Perryman; Professor Arthur Petersen; Professor James Phillips; Professor Hynek Pikhart ; Dr Jeffrey Pittaway; Dr Stephen Potts; Professor David Pym; Professor Stephen Quirke; Dr Joana Ramalho; Professor Davide Ravasi; Professor Margaret Rawes; Professor Samantha Rayner; Professor Geraint Rees; Professor Jane Rendell; Professor Antonella Riccio; Professor Mary Richardson; Professor Helen Roberts; Dr Tristan Robinson; Dr Suzanne Ruddy; Professor Ruben Saakyan; Professor Vieri Samek-Lodovici; Professor Joanne Santini; Professor Ralf Schoepfer; Professor Stephanie Schorge; Professor Eloise Scotford; Professor Andrea Sella; Professor Alessio Serafini; Professor Mala Shah; Professor Maryam Shahmanesh; Professor Sonu Shamdasani; Professor David Shanks; Dr Ala'a Shehabi; Professor Elizabeth Shepherd; Professor Lorraine Sherr; Dr Ruth Siddall; Mr Justin Siefker; Professor Talvinder Sihra; Professor Bill Sillar; Professor Angus Silver; Dr Samuel Sims; Professor Michael Singer; Professor Trevor Smart; Mr Andy Smith; Professor Anthony Smith; Professor Rosalind Smyth; Professor Samuel Solomon; Professor Pam Sonnenberg; Professor Catalina Spataru; Professor Sarah Spurgeon; Professor Kaila Srail; Professor Michael Stacey; Dr Karen Stepanyan; Professor Sacha Stern; Professor Michael Stewart; Dr Sherrill Stroschein; Ms Joanna Stroud; Professor Judith Suissa; Dr Mike Sulu; Dr Bugra Susler; Professor Alastair Sutcliffe; Ms Stephanie Sze; Professor Giles Thomas; Professor Julian Thompson; Professor Alan Thompson; Dr Amy Thornton; Dr Matteo Tiratelli; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Professor Helena Titheridge; Professor John Tomaney; Professor Ahmed Toosy; Mr Martyn Towner; Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson; Ms Helen Tsui; Professor Gert Van Der Heijden; Professor Liz Varga; Professor Laura Vaughan; Dr Nalini Vittal; Dr Bella Vivat; Ms Kirsty Walker; Professor Nicola Walshe; Dr Ryan Wang; Professor David Waters; Professor Li Wei; Ms Katherine Welch; Ms Breege Whiten; Professor Andrew Wills; Professor James

Wilson; Professor Duncan Wilson; Ms Tor Wright; Dr Christine (Xine) Yao; Professor Christopher Yeo; Dr Vedran Zerjav.

In attendance: Ms Charu Gorasia, Dr Clare Goudy, Ms Natasha Lewis, Mr Nick McGhee, Ms Olivia Whiteley.

Apologies: Professor James Bainbridge; Professor Mark Emberton; Dr Jens Kandt; Professor David Lomas; Dr Merle Mahon; Professor Gesine Manuwald; Professor Jenny Mindell; Professor Enrico Palandri; Dr Michaela Pollock; Professor Sarah Walker; Professor Dominic Wyse; Professor Tarek Yousry; Professor Stan Zochowski.

The meeting opened with a minute's silence to mark the period of national mourning following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Part I: Preliminary Formal Business

62 ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES

62.1 The minutes of the AB meeting of 30 May 2022 [AB Minutes 57-61, 2021-22] were confirmed, subject to the following amendment to the first sentence of the third bullet point of Minute 59.3:

Members enquired after the arrangements in respect of any credit (such as air miles) to the institution arising from the use of a ~~single, institutional-wide~~ mandated designated travel agency, as the issue had arisen at other institutions.

63 MATTERS ARISING

63.1 A query had been raised at the last meeting about the treatment of accrued credit from travel bookings [AB Minute 59.3, 2021-22]. The Provost reported that, when booking travel through the mandated travel agency, colleagues could accrue air miles on an individual basis by quoting their Frequent Flyer number. UCL also accrued air miles as an institution, and any members of staff could submit a claim to offset their travel using that credit. No privileged access was afforded to any member of staff. The Provost would circulate a note on the issue.

63.2 Academic Board discussed the related issue of carbon emissions from travel and how this was calculated. Headline data on this issue would also be included in the circulated note.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

64 UCL STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-27: EDUCATION COMMITTEE NOTE ON EDUCATION PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMMES; SIZE AND SHAPE (Paper 9-42)

- 64.1 As context to the strategy conversation, the Provost gave an overview of the current financial position. In view of the relatively fixed nature of key elements of the income stream, particularly the home student fee, UCL would need to identify and remove unnecessary costs if it wished to invest in its institutional priorities. Those priorities included staff pay, digital infrastructure, and the physical estate. The latter referred to the more efficient use of the current footprint and the delivery of existing commitments, including mandatory compliance and other necessary repairs and maintenance, rather than high-visibility new projects.
- 64.2 The driver on pay was not only the extraordinary inflationary environment but also the issue of UCL's competitiveness within the sector. It was envisaged that a Voluntary Redundancy scheme would be created; this was due for discussion with the campus trade unions shortly.
- 64.3 The overall cost of central services had been declining in recent years, with increases in faculty contributions driven primarily by space costs. UMC had discussed the identification of differentiated savings targets across all units, both Professional Services and academic. These would be set over a four-year period against the baseline of the 2022/23 budget. Targets would be differentiated to take account of varying circumstances across the institution, with research budgets protected. Once the targets had been identified, it would be for each unit to determine the best way to meet them. Faculties were now engaged in a process of reviewing the data used to inform the target-setting process, and in ensuring that the targets were deliverable.
- 64.4 UMC had recently approved a programme of enhanced financial support to students by way of bursaries, studentships and the hardship fund.
- 64.5 A date was being sought for a Town Hall on the university finances during the coming term. Members welcomed a suggestion from the Chair that an additional meeting of Academic Board be arranged on the same topic.

64A Education Committee note on education priorities and programmes

- 64A.1 At its meeting on 15 March 2022 Academic Board had asked Education Committee (EdCom) to consider the 'Education Priorities and Programmes' document. The Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience), as Chair of EdCom, thanked members of the committee for the significant amount of work they had carried out over the last few months.
- 64A.2 A number of individual questions arising from EdCom's own discussions and from consultation feedback had been identified, and were set out in the paper. EdCom's view was that Education Priorities and Programmes had identified

broadly the right areas to pursue, and that the next step should be to give consideration to more detailed project plans and options, with important decisions on educational policy coming back to Academic Board for discussion. It was noted that this process would happen at the same time as the development of UCL's TEF submission, which EdCom would bring to Academic Board in the autumn.

64B Size and Shape

- 64B.1 The paper focussed on the question of Size. The Provost considered that there was insufficient capacity for a detailed discussion across the institution about Shape at this time, and that this would be especially difficult at the moment in view of the significant levels of uncertainty arising from the external environment. Academic Board's feedback was requested on the proposal that Shape be discussed in the second half of the consultation period. It would be important to develop an understanding of whether there was a gap between the combined impact of faculties' individual aspirations for their student numbers and the general view of the academic community about the size of the institution overall.
- 64B.2 The Size and Shape paper had been revised ahead of its publication on 1 September to reflect conversations at Council, ExComAB and UMC. A Town Hall was scheduled for 15 September.
- 64B.3 The paper was founded on a high-level model which had been developed with significant academic input by way of a validation group. A high-level model did not include the level of detail that would be expected in a full financial model, but it could be used to generate and test scenarios rapidly with a view to elucidating the marginal cost and benefit of different kinds of activity. Five scenarios were modelled in the paper, including the current arrangement as a baseline. Broadly, the picture was that the consequences of any significant change in the number of students were likely to be unpalatable. Fewer students would mean a reduced capacity to cross-subsidise research, although there was scope for adjustment by way of changing unregulated fees. Any significant increase in student numbers however risked outpacing the institution's capacity to deliver.
- 64B.4 In a section reviewing those income streams that had a relatively low impact on the physical estate, the paper raised the question of online teaching. Any expansion of digital teaching delivery would necessarily require a significant initial period of work and investment, as well as further discussion at Academic Board and other bodies. The paper proposed that, if this was felt to be a viable direction of travel, a task force should be established to consider the way forward. Further discussion would also be required on the complex question of how considerations of sustainability should be accounted for, notably in respect of the carbon cost generated by student travel.
- 64B.5 During the course of discussion the following points were raised:

- Historically there had been a tendency to respond to budgetary pressure by increasing student numbers. Moderate, organic growth was helpful in allowing space for new course development. The Provost was keen to develop a sense of mutual accountability at UMC including collective ownership of the issues arising from increased student numbers.
- It was increasingly difficult to determine the approach to making offers in order to achieve a particular cohort size. Past data became particularly unreliable as a guide to conversion rates when a discipline's international reputation changed significantly.
- It was suggested that the paper be amended to use the term 'incremental' cost (or benefit) in preference to 'marginal'.
- Members queried the value of modelling in the context of a highly unstable external environment.
- The issue of the mix of home and overseas students, in addition to raising a number of practical questions about sustainability, spoke to the more theoretical question of a university's social licence to operate.
- Some members felt that the modelling approach, though interesting as a first step, was too simple in its current form to act as the basis for an informed decision on the University's future direction. ExComAB had raised a number of issues in a note circulated before the meeting, including: assumptions about uniformity across disciplines; the linearity of the model of the relationship between volume of research or teaching activity and costs; the lack of recognition of the subsidy of teaching by research (eg through research projects and by attracting students); the lack of modelling of carbon costs; the absence of reflection on the core ethical values proposed in 'Vision, Mission and Values'; and the need for significant further work on online teaching.

64B.6 Members of ExComAB had requested a vote on a proposal that the paper be rewritten to reflect the issues raised, and then brought back to AB. It was confirmed that a no-growth scenario could be modelled relatively quickly, but that a fundamental reworking of the model would require a significant investment of time and effort. The Provost queried what it would mean to rewrite a consultation paper that had already been published. Rather, a strategy was a living document that would be refined over time as a matter of course. There was no proposal to move significantly into online teaching without preparation and consideration of a full business case, and the question of the home/overseas student mix would naturally form part of the 'Shape' conversation which it was proposed be held later in the strategic period.

64B.7 Academic Board was invited to vote on a proposal that the Size and Shape paper be redrafted to address specifically (i) the need for more detailed financial modelling including both a no-growth scenario and changes of "Shape" (in the form of differences in expansion of home and non-UK student numbers), (ii) the impact of international students' travel, and (iii) the pros and cons of more online teaching. ExComAB offered to assist the authors of the paper in this revision process. ExComAB looked forward to the revised paper coming back to AB for further discussion.

64B.8 The vote was as follows:

Yes	116 votes	64%
No	48 votes	27%
Abstain	17 votes	9 %

64B.9 After the officially-scheduled end of the meeting, members of Academic Board who had stayed on debated how this vote was to be understood and whether this indicated that the Size and Shape paper should be taken out of the strategy altogether. Other members felt that the vote reflected a sense of urgency for action, particularly on the concerns relating to sustainability.

64B.10 The Provost, after establishing through a show of hands that the majority of Academic Board members present were content for him to proceed in this way, invited a show of hands on a proposal “that AB understand the vote to mean that (i) work on shape ought not to be left for the two years proposed in the paper, but ought to proceed apace especially given the climate implications of our current business model with its high dependence on international students, and asks that a paper on this issue be brought to the AB before the student number planning exercise for the academic year 2024/25; and (ii) a paper on the desirability of a move towards online education and micro-credentialling be brought to AB by the close of the academic year 2022/23.” 99 of 139 members present at that point indicated that they were in favour of this proposal. The Provost would circulate the wording for confirmation to members of AB after the meeting, and there would be an option of a further meeting if concerns remained.

Part III: Other business for approval or information

65 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

65.1 2 November 2022 at 14:00-15:50. The date of an additional meeting on university finances [see Minute 64.5] was to be confirmed.

Nick McGhee
Secretary to Academic Board
Tel: [+44] (0)20 3108 8217
Email: n.mcghee@ucl.ac.uk