



## Academic Board

Wednesday 16 December 2020<sup>1</sup>

### MINUTES

**Present:** Professor Michael Arthur, President and Provost (Chair).

Professor Bas Aarts; Dr Ali Abolfathi; Professor Joerg Albert; Mr Adnan Ali; Dr Seth Anziska; Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Manuel Arroyo-Kalin; Dr Paul Ayris; Professor James Bainbridge; Dr Cecile Bats; Professor Jonathan Bell; Mr Ayman Benmati; Professor Mette Berg; Mr Espen Bergqvist; Professor Michael Berkowitz; Professor Zoltan Biedermann; Professor Stephanie Bird; Professor Brad Blitz; Professor Camillo Boano; Professor Douglas Bourn; Professor Annie Britton; Professor Jamie Brown; Dr Nicole Brown; Professor Robert Brownstone; Professor Eric Brunner; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Dr Suzy Buckley; Professor Neil Burgess; Professor Joseph Cain; Dr Alisia Carnemolla; Dr Celia Caulcott; Professor Benjamin Chain; Professor Maria Chait; Dr Evangelia Chrysikou; Professor Vijay Chudasama; Professor Beverley Clark; Professor Susan Collins; Professor Claire Colomb; Professor Anna Cox; Dr Sonya Crowe; Ms Sonja Curtis; Professor Izzat Darwazeh; Professor Pamela Davidson; Dr Lucy Davies; Professor Janice Derry; Professor Rohan de Silva; Ms Dominique Draï; Professor Sandra Dunsmuir; Professor Ian Eames; Professor Piet Eeckhout; Ms Ecem Ergin; Professor Joanna Evans; Dr Russell Evans; Professor Susan Evans; Ms Pascale Fanning-Tichborne; Ms Ava Fatah; Dr Liory Fern-Pollak; Professor Patrizia Ferretti; Professor Margot Finn; Professor Elizabeth Fisher; Mr James Ford; Professor Eric Fraga; Professor Murray Fraser; Professor Nicholas Freemantle; Dr Bettina Friedrich; Dr David Frost; Dr Martin Fry; Professor Mary Fulbrook; Professor Alison Fuller; Dr Federico Galvanin; Dr Caroline Garaway; Professor Tamar Garb; Dr Eduardo Garcadiago Ortega; Dr Claire Garnett; Professor Mark Geller; Professor Alasdair Gibb; Professor Shirli Gilbert; Professor Paul Gilroy; Dr Hugh Goodacre; Professor Eric Gordy; Mr James Gorridge; Dr Ryan Grammenos; Ms Amanda Greene; Professor Lee Grieveson; Professor Francois Guesnet; Dr Lucia Patrizio Gunning; Professor Patrick Haggard; Mr Jesper Hansen; Professor Kenneth Harris; Professor Graham Hart; Professor Dame Hazel Genn; Professor Evangelos Himonides; Professor Daniel Hochhauser; Dr Arne Hofmann; Professor Katherine Holt; Dr Alan Ingram; Professor Adrian Isaacs; Dr Dan Jagger; Professor Helene Joffe; Professor Philip Jones; Professor Anthony Julius; Professor Lily Kahn; Dr Jens Kandt; Ms Gunay Karimova; Mr Peter Kelly; Dr John Kelsey; Mr Joshua Kerr; Dr Maki Kimura; Professor John King; Professor Josef Kittler; Professor Jonathan Knowles; Professor Nikolaos Konstantinidis; Dr Ghita Kouadri Mostefaoui; Ms Katherine Koulle; Mr Dimitrios Kraniotis; Dr Fiona Kyle; Dr Danielle Lamb; Professor Diana Laurillard; Professor Jonathan Ledermann; Professor Louis

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

Lemieux; Professor Paola Lettieri; Ms Ruoning Li; Professor Christoph Lindner; Professor Annemaree Lloyd-Zantiotis; Professor David Lomas; Professor Laurence Lovat; Ms Collette Lux; Ms Xuanyi Ma; Dr Isabel Mackay; Professor Sandy MacRobert; Professor Eleanor Main; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva; Professor Ruth Mandel; Professor John Martin; Dr Ruth McGinity; Professor Jacqueline Mcglade; Professor Andrew Mcquillin; Dr Saladin Meckled-Garcia; Professor Robert Mills; Professor Zoran Milutinovic; Professor John Mitchell; Professor Sara Mole; Ms Laure Montangerand; Professor Gudrun Moore; Dr Dafne Zuleima Morgado Ramirez; Professor Sharon Morris; Professor Gemma Moss; Professor Steven Murdoch; Ms Marga Navarrete; Dr Helene Neveu Kringelbach; Dr Mark Newman; Professor Thanh Nguyen; Dr Abel Nyamapfene; Professor Catherine O'Keeffe; Professor Moses Oketch; Professor Alexandra Olaya-Castro; Professor Martin Oliver; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Enrico Palandri; Professor Ioannis Papakonstantinou; Professor Amos Paran; Professor Jayne Parker; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Nora Pashayan; Dr Olga Perski; Professor Ann Phoenix; Professor Hynek Pikhart; Professor Deenan Pillay; Dr Jeffrey Pittaway; Dr Michaela Pollock; Professor Mike Porter; Professor John Potter; Dr Stephen Potts; Professor David Price; Professor Stephen Quirke; Dr Joana Ramalho; Dr Samantha Rayner; Professor Geraint Rees; Professor William Richardson; Professor Helen Roberts; Dr Tristan Robinson; Professor Sue Rogers; Dr Daniela Romano; Dr Flaminia Ronca; Professor William Rosenberg; Professor Sasha Roseneil; Dr Suzanne Ruddy; Professor Karin Ruggaber; Ms Fiona Ryland; Professor Alan Salama; Dr Benet Salway; Professor Prince Saprai; Professor Federica Sarro; Professor Giorgio Savini; Professor Andreas Schatzlein; Professor Ralf Schoepfer; Professor Sonu Shamdasani; Professor David Shanks; Dr Ala'a Shehabi; Professor Elizabeth Shepherd; Dr Michael Short; Mr Justin Siefker; Dr Bill Sillar; Professor Angus Silver; Ms Thushyanthi Sivagnanam; Professor Sam Smidt; Mr Andy Smith; Professor Anthony Smith; Professor Alan Sokal; Professor Christophe Soligo; Professor Eva Sorensen; Professor Catalina Spataru; Professor Paul Standish; Professor Philip Stanier; Professor Hugh Starkey; Professor Claudio Stern; Professor Sacha Stern; Professor Fiona Stevenson; Professor Michael Stewart; Mr William Stewart; Dr Allison Stielau; Dr Sherrill Stroschein; Ms Joanna Stroud; Professor Judith Suissa; Professor Adam Swift; Professor Matthew Sydes; Mr Bryan Taylor; Professor Irving Taylor; Professor Francesco Saverio Tedesco; Professor Alan Thompson; Dr Amy Thornton; Dr Eleanor Tillett; Professor Jordan Timothy; Dr Matteo Tiratelli; Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson; Ms Helen Tsui; Professor Ijeoma Uchegbu; Professor Elaine Unterhalter; Professor Martin Utley; Mr Clive Vassell; Professor Laura Vaughan; Dr Nalini Vittal; Professor Bridget Wade; Professor Michael Walls; Dr Ryan Wang; Professor Graham Welch; Ms Katherine Welch; Professor Ian White; Professor Duncan Wilson; Professor Nicholas Wood; Professor Selina Wray; Ms Tor Wright; Professor Haim Yacobi; Dr Ozgur Yazaydin; Dr Vedran Zerjav; Dr Stan Zochowski.

**In attendance:** Mr Douglas Bertram; Dr Clare Goudy; Professor David Katz; Mr Nick McGhee (Secretary); Ms Anne Marie O'Mullane; Professor Sir Mark Pepys; Ms Abigail Smith; Ms Kirsty Walker; Mr Sean Wallis; Ms Olivia Whiteley.

**Apologies:** Dr Declan Chard; Professor Lucie Clapp; Professor Frances Edwards; Professor Haidy Geismar; Professor John Gray; Dr Anne Grydehøj; Professor Stephen Hart; Dr Rhodri Jervis; Dr Helga Lúthersdóttir; Professor Charles Marson;

Dr Margaret Mayston; Professor Jennifer Mindell; Professor Sir Michael Pepper; Dr Stephen Potts; Ms Maria Sibiryakova; Professor Trevor Smart; Professor Jon Thompson; Dr Bella Vivat.

## **Part I: Preliminary Formal Business**

### **15 ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES**

15.1 The minutes of the AB meeting of 29 October 2020 [AB Minutes 1-14, 2020-21] were confirmed.

### **16 MATTERS ARISING**

16.1 Academic Committee had discussed its Terms of Reference at a meeting on 19 November [AB Minute 3, 2020-21]. Amendments would be submitted to Council on 18 February 2021.

## **Part II: Matters for Discussion**

### **17 PROVOST'S BUSINESS**

17.1 In his last meeting as chair, the Provost thanked and congratulated the UCL community for the advances made in research, education, innovation and enterprise in recent years. He particularly encouraged UCL to continue to make progress in the following areas:

- listening to the student voice and engaging the student body in decision-making, the benefits of which were evidenced in the student union's recent open letter<sup>2</sup> to the Provost and teaching staff;
- tackling discrimination on the basis of gender, race and other protected characteristics. Significant competitive advantage was available to universities who could overcome barriers to diverse inclusion in order to access a broader pool of talent in recruitment;
- continued investment in the advancement and development function at UCL. During 2020 the Campaign for UCL had surpassed its £600m target;
- a continued rise in UCL's global profile, driven by academic excellence. UCL's profile had risen dramatically in recent years. A key goal for the Provost had been to secure and retain a place for UCL in the global top ten. Maintaining this level of academic excellence and attracting the best

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<sup>2</sup> <https://studentsunionucl.org/blogs/jim-onyemenam/open-letter-to-provost-and-ucls-teaching-community>

staff would depend upon achieving a financially sustainable position and making ongoing investment in infrastructure.

- 17.2 The Provost updated AB on the situation with COVID-19. The past nine months had been a particularly difficult time for the sector, but the move to online delivery of examinations and education at UCL represented a significant achievement. Earlier projections regarding the impact on student recruitment had proved to be overly pessimistic, with international student recruitment having been particularly buoyant this year. The delivery of a high-quality student experience remained UCL's primary focus. Student interruption rates were currently at 2.3%, which was double the usual level, but the number of students leaving their course altogether was at half the level of a year ago. Interruption rates would inevitably have a financial impact, as would the reduced occupation rates in UCL accommodation.
- 17.3 Professor Arthur concluded by expressing his sense of honour in having served as Provost over the past 7.5 years and his confidence in his successor Dr Michael Spence, who would take up the post on 11 January 2021.

## 18 TIME LIMIT FOR SERVICE ON ACADEMIC BOARD (Paper 2-11)

- 18.1 Professor Evangelos Himonides presented the paper on behalf of GCAB. The proposal was that Council be invited to remove the Regulation requiring elected members of Academic Board to step down for at least one year after serving six consecutive years. This proposal was being made against the background of an ongoing high level of vacancies on AB in most elected constituencies. The rule had the effect of obliging some of the most engaged members of AB to sit out for a year, but brought no real advantage in terms of turnover of membership, given the high number of places available.
- 18.2 In discussing the proposal members noted that:
- the majority of AB members were ex officio professors, whose terms were not limited;
  - the real issue was one of poor participation rather than the term limit;
  - the issue was one element of the wider question of AB's visibility and communication with the UCL community, as identified by the Commission of Inquiry report.

### ***RECOMMENDED – to Council***

- 18.3 That Regulation for Management 3.2(e) be amended to read as follows:

Elected Members of the Academic Board under Statute 7(1)(C)(i) shall remain members for a period of two years and shall be eligible for re-election for successive periods of two years at a time.

- 18.4 That Regulation for Management 3.3(d) be amended to read as follows:

Elected Members of the Academic Board under Statute 7(1)(C)(ii) shall remain members for a period of one year, or, if elected to fill a casual vacancy in the course of a year, for the remainder of that year, and shall be eligible for re-election.

## 19 **UCL 2034 ENABLER A – UPDATE** (Paper 2-12)

- 19.1 Wendy Appleby (Registrar and Head of Student and Registry Services) introduced the paper, and requested feedback ahead of its submission to Council on 18 February 2021.
- 19.2 The report reflected the new enabler statement and objectives following their revision last year, as well as the switch to online service delivery necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Consideration was now being given to future ways of working and further adjustments to methods for service delivery in the light of learning from the pandemic experience; this would be particularly beneficial for students beyond the Bloomsbury campus.
- 19.3 The following points were raised during discussion:
- The new role of Student Success Adviser was being piloted for first year undergraduate students. The view was expressed that this support had proved beneficial and it was hoped that it might be extended to students in other years, particularly in respect of mental health support. In response the Registrar explained that the services of Student Support and Wellbeing were available to all students and included dedicated mental health advisers; departments should refer students in need of this support to this team. The Provost recorded his thanks to staff in Student Support and Wellbeing for their work supporting students during the pandemic.
  - It was noted that the switch to online delivery had heavily impacted the workload of teaching staff, exacerbated in some parts of the institution by the higher than expected student numbers in 2020/21. The Provost was alert to this issue, and £15m of funding had been made available to the faculties most heavily affected by high student recruitment. Members also raised the issue of changes to the nomenclature of teaching roles without regrading.

## 20 **WORKING GROUP ON RACISM AND PREJUDICE – REPORT** (Paper 2-13)

- 20.1 The Chair of the Working Group, Dr Seth Anziska, introduced the report. Dr Anziska noted that the Working Group had been deeply disturbed by the examples of antisemitic incidents cited in the report. Any failure by UCL to

address such behaviour presented a real and present danger to staff and students.

- 20.2 Section IV of the report gathered together the relevant policies, procedures and legislation and considered how mechanisms for tackling unacceptable behaviour could be improved, alongside parallel activity on improving the campus climate. The report therefore made a number of educational recommendations which were intended to encourage the development of a collective understanding of the functioning of racism and group prejudice at UCL, and a commitment to challenging this using the tools already available.
- 20.3 The Working Group had examined the question of Council's adoption of the IHRA definition in November 2019 and had assessed the compatibility of the definition with a university's responsibilities in respect of academic freedom. In doing so the Working Group had consulted with external experts and staff and student members of the UCL community. The Working Group regretted that the current debate was being held after rather than in advance of the adoption of the definition.
- 20.4 There was a danger of the issue of the adoption of the IHRA definition being conflated with the indisputable need to combat antisemitism. The Working Group did not consider that adopting the definition guaranteed the efficacy of such efforts. The Working Group did however have concerns about the potential for the definition to constrain legitimate free speech on campus, as well as about its compatibility with UCL policies and statutes and its enforceability through disciplinary procedures.
- 20.5 One member of the Working Group had dissented from the recommendation in favour of retraction. He explained that he considered that the negative impact of retraction would be disproportionate when set alongside the concerns about academic freedom. He noted that the definition indicated that its accompanying illustrative examples *could* amount to antisemitism when considered in context, but did not necessarily do so. The two caveats proposed by the Home Affairs Select Committee and adopted by Council explicitly recognised that antisemitic intent was required in order to meet the definition. In his view there were preferable alternatives to retraction, including AB advising Council that UCL should confirm its duty to uphold the Public Sector Equality Duty and should make clear that the definition had no legal force and should not be used in disciplinary proceedings.
- 20.6 Before opening the discussion to the floor, the Provost summarised representations received from members and others ahead of the meeting. These included: a petition from members of the Jewish Society asking that the recommendation to retract be rejected (252 signatories); a letter from students expressing concerns about the impact of the adoption on academic freedom (196 signatories); a letter from 31 alumni supporting the recommendations; and a small number of representations from individual members of staff on both sides of the debate. These had been shared with the chair of the Working Group, who confirmed his view that a reasonable summary had been given.

20.7 During the ensuing discussion individual members of Academic Board made the following points:

- Some members spoke in favour of the definition, taking the view that its adoption by Council demonstrated a positive, victim-centred approach to the university's duty of care in the context of an ongoing rise in antisemitic behaviour in British society and on campus. In their view, retraction risked sending a damaging message about the institution's appetite to tackle such behaviour. It was suggested that the definition had the overwhelming support of the Jewish community, including UCL's own students, and that the report had been written without adequate consultation with Jewish students or with others who would have been in a position to give a different perspective. The proposal had caused dismay to students and staff as well as the wider community. The report subordinated their lived experience to an alleged constraint on academic freedom.
- Other members took the view that the value of the definition was a symbolic rather than a practical one. The report had acknowledged this symbolic value but had also assessed in detail the practical impact of the adoption of the definition, and had concluded that the definition itself was unfit for purpose, and its accompanying examples ambiguous. Consequently the definition provided no real protection. It was further noted that the primary author of the definition was strongly opposed to its being used in this way in university settings.
- AB discussed the impact of the adoption of the definition on free speech in a university context. It was suggested that, although many public bodies had adopted the definition, there was no evidence of its having restricted free speech, criminalised expressions of concern about social justice, or curbed student activities. Others however suggested that the 'chilling' effect referred to in the report arose from the lack of clarity in the definition and the uncertain link between the examples and the criteria for making a judgment. The concern was that in cases of any uncertainty, academics would be drawn towards self-censorship in order to mitigate the risk of being accused of contravening the definition. Others however suggested that the risk presented by uncertainty highlighted the importance of having a definition in seeking to minimise any such lack of clarity.
- Speakers on both sides of the debate noted that the definition was not legally binding. Some felt that the university could not rely on equality law in meeting its obligation to protect students from discrimination, and that a definition of antisemitism was therefore required. Others considered that the report demonstrated that there was adequate legislation in place to address racism generally, and that the adoption of a definition in one group-specific instance was therefore superfluous.

- It was suggested that questions of antisemitism were all too easily conflated with issues concerning criticism of the State of Israel. The example of a protest at a Friends of Israel event on 27 October 2016 was cited. Other members felt that the report's concerns about the conflation of these questions were unfounded.

20.8 Due to pressure of time and the number of members wishing to speak, the chair raised the option of adjourning and reconvening in the New Year for further discussion and a vote. This would also provide the Working Group with an opportunity to give further thought to the method of voting on the various proposals, and to consider potential alternative definitions. AB agreed to adjourn<sup>3</sup>.

### **Part III: Other Business for approval or Information**

#### **21 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

21.1 10 February 2021 at 2.05pm.

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Secretary to Academic Board  
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<sup>3</sup> Following further consultation with the Working Group after the meeting, it was agreed that the matter would be brought back for discussion at the next scheduled meeting of Academic Board on 10 February 2021.