



## Academic Board

Wednesday 26 January 2022<sup>1</sup>

### MINUTES

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

Dr Ali Abolfathi, Professor Ibrahim Abubakar, Mr James Agar, Professor Lynn Ang, Professor Kathleen Armour, Dr Manuel Arroyo-Kalin, Professor Jonathan Ashmore, Professor David Atkinson, Dr Paul Ayriss, Dr Sakiru Badmos, Professor Jurg Bahler, Professor Angus Bain, Professor Gianluca Baio, Dr Emily Baker, Professor Jamie Baker, Professor Kristin Bakke, Professor Simon Banks, Professor Yolande Barnes, Dr Cecile Bats, Professor Polina Bayvel, Professor Costante Bellettini, Mr Ayman Benmati, Professor Michael Berkowitz, Professor Robert Biel, Professor Stephanie Bird, Dr Matthew Blain, Professor Martin Bobak, Professor David Bogle, Professor Noemie Bouhana, Professor Douglas Bourn, Professor Rachel Bowlby, Dr Patrick Bray, Professor Annie Britton, Professor Geraldine Brodie, Ms Annabel Brown, Professor Jamie Brown, Professor Robert Brownstone, Professor Stella Bruzzi, Professor Vishwanie Budhram-Mahadeo, Professor Richard Butterwick-Pawlikowski, Dr Tim Button, Mr Tadhg Caffrey, Dr Velia Cardin, Professor Claire Carmalt, Dr Alisia Carnemolla, Professor Madeline Carr, Professor Rachel Chambers, Dr Declan Chard, Professor Elaine Chase, Professor Joanna Chataway, Andrey Chau, Professor Michael Cheetham, Professor James Cheshire, Dr Evangelia Chryssikou, Professor Olga Ciccarelli, Professor Beverley Clark, Professor Shamshad Cockcroft, Dr Alun Coker, Professor Susan Collins, Professor Barbara Conrath, Professor Anna Cox, Ms Sonja Curtis, Professor Izzat Darwazah, Professor Nathan Davies, Professor Sally Day, Professor Marc Deisenroth, Professor Zongyi Deng, Professor Janice Derry, Dr Elton Dias, Professor Andrew Dick, Professor Dagmara Dimitriou, Professor Snezana Djordjevic, Professor Annette Dolphin, Professor Paulo Drinot, Professor Sandra Dunsmuir, Professor Richard Ellis, Professor Marc Esteve, Dr Russell Evans, Professor Susan Evans, Professor Simon Faithfull, Ms Pascale Fanning-Tichborne, Ms Ava Fatah, Professor Delmiro Fernandez-Reyes, Dr Liory Fern-Pollak, Professor Patrizia Ferretti, Professor Margot Finn, Professor Andrew Fisher, Professor Elizabeth Fisher, Mr James Ford, Professor Stuart Foster, Professor Nicholas Freemantle, Dr Bettina Friedrich, Dr David Frost, Dr Martin Fry, Professor Tatiana Fumasoli, Professor Jonathan Gale, Professor Sarah Garfinkel, Dr Claire Garnett, Professor Haidy Geismar, Professor Mark Geller, Professor Guido Germano, Professor Alasdair Gibb, Professor Adam Gibson, Professor Shirli Gilbert, Professor Faye Gishen, Professor Nikolaos Gonis, Dr Hugh Goodacre, Mr James Gorrige, Professor David Gough, Ms Emma Grant, Dr Anne Grydehoj, Professor David Guile, Dr Lucia Patrizio Gunning, Professor Patrick Haggard, Professor

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<sup>1</sup> This meeting was held via videoconference.

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Stephen Hailes, Mr Martin Hall, Professor Stephen Hart, Professor Michael Heinrich, Professor Therese Hesketh, Dr Ulrike Heuer, Professor Evangelos Himonides, Dr Christine Hoffmann, Professor Arne Hofmann, Professor Jennifer Hudson, Professor Andrew Hudson-Smith, Professor Richard Jackman, Professor Dan Jagger, Ms Liz Jones, Professor Tim Jordan, Professor Jasmina Jovanovic, Dr Thomas Kador, Dr Jens Kandt, Professor Jian Kang, Mr Peter Kelly, Professor Nicoletta Kessarlis, Dr Maki Kimura, Dr Rachel King, Professor James Kirkbride, Professor Josef Kittler, Professor Robert Kleta, Ms Edyta Kostanek, Professor Patty Kostkova, Professor Dimitri Kullmann, Professor Marie-Carine Lall, Dr Danielle Lamb, Dr Borja Legarra Herrero, Dr Fiona Leigh, Professor Louis Lemieux, Professor Tim Levine, Professor Li Wei, Professor Christoph Lindner, Professor Allison Littlejohn, Professor Vladimir Litvak, Dr Helga Lúthersdóttir, Dr Isabel Mackay, Professor Sandy MacRobert, Professor Mairead MacSweeney, Professor Claudio De Magalhaes, Professor Eleanor Main, Ms Viktória Makai, Professor Frederic Malherbe, Dr Giulio Marini, Professor John Martin, Dr Juliana Martins, Professor Sarah Matthews, Professor Manolis Mavrikis, Dr Margaret Mayston, Dr Claire McAndrew, Professor Carolyn McGettigan, Dr Ruth McGinity, Professor Anne McMunn, Dr Saladin Meckled-Garcia, Professor Francesca Medda, Professor Stanimira Milcheva, Ms Angharad Milenkovic, Professor Grant Mills, Professor Sara Mole, Professor Jonathan Montgomery, Dr Dafne Zuleima Morgado Ramirez, Professor Rear Admiral Neil Morisetti, Professor Sharon Morris, Professor Stephen Moss, Professor Vivek Mudera, Professor Veronique Munoz-Darde, Professor Steven Murdoch, Professor Mirco Musolesi, Ms Marga Navarrete, Dr Helene Neveu Kringelbach, Dr Mark Newman, Dr Will Newton, Professor Thanh Nguyen, Professor Lorraine Noble, Dr Alex Norori-McCormac, Dr Abel Nyamapfene, Dr Ademola Odunsi, Professor Moses Oketch, Mr Derfel Owen, Professor Norbert Pachler, Professor Mathew Page, Professor Enrico Palandri, Professor Ioannis Papakonstantinou, Professor Jenny Parkes, Professor Ivan Parkin, Dr Thomas Peach, Professor Paola Pedarzani, Professor Jane Perryman, Dr Olga Perski, Professor James Phillips, Professor Ann Phoenix, Professor Franck Pichaud, Professor Hynek Pikhart, Dr Jeffrey Pittaway, Professor Helene Plun-Favreau, Professor David Price, Professor Sarah Price, Professor David Pym, Professor Ahad Rahim, Professor Greta Rait, Dr Joana Ramalho, Professor Geraint Rees, Professor Jane Rendell, Professor Antonella Riccio, Professor Mary Richardson, Professor William Richardson, Professor Liz Rideal, Professor Carol Rivas, Professor Helen Roberts, Dr Flaminia Ronca, Professor Sasha Roseneil, Dr Suzanne Ruddy, Ms Fiona Ryland, Professor Vieri Samek-Lodovici, Professor Peter Sammonds, Ms Heather Sampson, Haleema Sarwar, Professor Giorgio Savini, Dr Tim Scanlon, Professor Ralf Schoepfer, Professor Stephanie Schorge, Professor Katrina Scior, Professor Eloise Scotford, Professor Toby Seddon, Professor Mala Shah, Professor Maryam Shahmanesh, Professor Sonu Shamdasani, Professor David Shanks, Dr Ala'a Shehabi, Professor Robert Sheil, Professor Nicola Shelton, Professor Tom Sheppard, Ms Maria Sibiryakova, Dr Ruth Siddall, Mr Justin Siefker, Professor Talvinder Sihra, Professor Bill Sillar, Professor Angus Silver, Dr Samuel Sims, Professor Michael Singer, Professor Trevor Smart, Professor Andrew Smith, Mr Andy Smith, Professor Anthony Smith, Dr Holly Smith, Professor Eva Sorensen, Professor Catalina Spataru, Professor Aimee Spector, Dr Uta Staiger, Professor Terence Stephenson, Professor Sacha Stern, Professor Claudio Stern, Professor Fiona Stevenson, Professor Jack Stilgoe, Professor Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, Dr Sherrill Stroschein, Ms Joanna Stroud, Professor Judith Suissa, Dr Mike Sulu, Dr Bugra Susler,

Professor Matthew Sydes, Ms Stephanie Sze, Mr Bryan Taylor, Professor Geraint Thomas, Professor Mark Thomas, Professor Alan Thompson, Professor Jon Thomson, Dr Amy Thornton, Professor Ulrich Tiedau, Professor Helena Titheridge, Professor Ahmed Toosy, Mr Martyn Towner, Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson, Ms Helen Tsui, Professor Liz Varga, Professor Laura Vaughan, Professor Essi Viding, Dr Nalini Vittal, Dr Bella Vivat, Professor Michael Wale, Ms Yasmin Walker, Professor Simon Walker-Samuel, Professor Michael Walls, Professor Nicola Walshe, Dr Ryan Wang, Professor David Waters, Ms Katherine Welch, Professor Ian White, Ms Breege Whiten, Professor Andrew Wills, Professor Duncan Wilson, Professor James Wilson, Professor Stephen Wilson, Professor Matthew Wing, Professor Nicholas Wood, Professor Tom Woodin, Professor Graham Worth, Professor Selina Wray, Dr Vedran Zerjav, Professor Stan Zochowski, Professor Alimuddin Zumla.

**In attendance:** Dr Rebecca Falkoff, Ms Charu Gorasia, Dr Clare Goudy, Mr Nick McGhee (Secretary to Academic Board), Ms Olivia Whiteley.

**Apologies:** Professor Helen Hackett, Professor Sir Peng Khaw, Professor Annemaree Lloyd, Professor Gesine Manuwald, Professor Jenny Mindell, Professor Gemma Moss, Professor Carlos Pavesio, Dr Michaela Pollock, Professor John Potter, Dr Stephen Potts, Professor Stephen Quirke, Dr Benet Salway, Professor Joy Sleeman, Professor Sarah Spurgeon, Dr Eleanor Tillett, Professor Ijeoma Uchegbu, Ms Marine-Océane Verdez-Scholler, Professor Sarah Walker, Professor Dominic Wyse.

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

### **19 ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES**

19.1 The minutes of the AB meeting of 10 December 2021 [AB Minutes 15-18, 2021-22] were confirmed.

### **20 MATTERS ARISING**

20.1 A note on the Independent SAGE methodology had been circulated to Academic Board [AB Minute 16, 2021-22]. Members discussed the decision not to adopt a 'Scores on the Doors' approach, mindful that this decision had to be taken in the context of the allocation of finite resources across a suite of possible measures. In response to a query about the role of internal academic expertise, the Provost noted that UCL's approach throughout the pandemic had been guided by UCL's Public Health Advisory Panel (PHAP). Members noted the timetable for roll-out of ventilation testing and CO<sub>2</sub> monitoring. It was suggested that there was a need for staff to receive guidance on their responsibilities in respect of CO<sub>2</sub> levels.

- 20.2 The Provost noted that a member of Academic Board who had been a signatory of one of the two letters in respect of UCL's position on Stonewall [AB Minute 17, 2021-22] had reported being targeted (outside Academic Board meetings) in a way which had felt threatening. The Provost reiterated that such behaviour was always unacceptable and emphasised the value of respecting the right of others to hold different views.

## Part II: Matters for Discussion

### 21 UCL STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027 (Paper 3-14)

- 21.1 The item was introduced by the Provost and by Professor Geraint Rees, Pro-Provost (Academic Planning).
- 21.2 The Provost summarised the iterative consultation process behind the two papers now before the Board: *Evolving the Grand Challenges*, which sought to build on UCL's tradition as a place of useful knowledge and proposed four candidate areas for initial discussion; and *Opportunities for Targeted Investment*, which set out a mechanism for proposal and approval of projects for university-level investment, as well as the principles on which such decisions would be taken. Feedback generated during earlier stages of the consultation process was already being considered, and members were reminded that the papers were publicly available on the website<sup>2</sup> and could therefore be shared with external networks.
- 21.3 At present UCL's Grand Challenges programme<sup>3</sup> provided a source of seed funding for projects aligned with broad thematic areas of activity. It was proposed firstly that the university should seek to build on that foundation by way of increased investment and co-ordination of activity within a more defined structure, and secondly that the Grand Challenges should find expression not only in terms of research activity but also through education and in the way the university conducted its own affairs. A range of views had been expressed in other fora about whether the proposed scale of investment was at the right level. There was no intention that UCL become the 'University of the Grand Challenges'; rather, the investment was intended to act as seed funding where there was a potential for it to have a catalytic effect in attracting other funding, both externally and internally.
- 21.4 In the course of the discussion the following points were raised:
- AB discussed the underlying concept of a centrally-directed approach to the Grand Challenges, characterised by some members as the 'think tank' approach, in contrast to the current arrangement which encouraged a bottom-up diversity of projects within broad thematic areas. Some members did not feel that their individual academic collaborations suggested that UCL's

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/strategic-plan-2022-27>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/grand-challenges/>

polycentricity was inherently problematic. The Provost noted that it was difficult to explain to policy-makers, industry and other external stakeholders the shape and distribution of UCL's academic expertise, and that this constituted a barrier to UCL's capability to act as an institution. UCL's "brand recognition" was relatively poor in view of its league-table position, and this could be expected to have a long-term impact on student recruitment and the ability to leverage funding. On the question of the 'think tank' model, the Provost's view was that while it was not illegitimate for governments and the wider community to look to universities for answers, it was not the role of the university as an organisation to advocate for particular solutions in public debate, not least because of the breadth of internal academic opinion on any given issue. That was not to say however that there was no value in seeking to curate the university's expertise, signposting and improving access to research. Members specifically cautioned against the risks inherent in any 'think tank' conception with respect to the relationship with governments. The Provost noted that robust safeguards were in place in respect of contracted research.

- A number of members commented on the references to individual disciplinary areas in the papers. It was suggested that selective reference to disciplinary areas risked a perception of a narrowing of scope. In particular, several members noted the lack of references to engineering and the physical sciences, specifically in the context of the potentially key role of engineering disciplines in developing solutions to the climate crisis. In drafting the papers, the intention had been to avoid identifying particular disciplinary areas with leadership of any one of the Grand Challenges. The proposed challenges were those where it was envisaged that a broad range of disciplinary areas would be likely to make a significant contribution. The consultation process was ongoing and members were being asked to feed back if they felt that any elements were being overlooked. The identification of specific challenges was in no way intended to hinder any discipline in developing its own plans; rather, the proposals were in relation to institutional-level activity, and reflected a sense of where seed funding and additional academic leadership had the greatest potential for catalytic impact in nurturing fruitful cross-disciplinary activity.
- During the course of the discussion individual members mentioned a number of other potential challenges, including: international conflict; the use of space; corruption; and food, either as a topic in its own right or as a key element of the climate crisis challenge. It was important to be mindful however of the question of UCL's comparative expertise and activity in any given area. A member suggested that UCL should seek to identify criteria that would speak to the institution's specific and unique distribution of expertise and where it was felt that it had the potential to create novel schools of thought which would be recognised from outside as being specific to UCL.
- On the question of reflecting the chosen Grand Challenges in the university's own operational delivery, members queried how it could be ensured that these would generate genuine ethical imperatives rather than becoming an exercise in identity branding. It was further noted that their incorporation into

an operational strategy had potentially very significant impact. Members cited as examples the carbon emissions arising from international student travel and the potential impact of the equality challenge on the culture of the institution. The Provost noted in this respect the importance of appropriate financial resource. When the strategy was submitted to Council it would be accompanied by a detailed financial plan.

- A query was raised as to what was envisaged in respect of the evaluation of the Grand Challenges against the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Provost acknowledged the challenge in ensuring that the document did not make facile reference to the Sustainable Development Goals, and instead engaged meaningfully with their ethos. This section of the paper would require further intellectual input.
- Members requested a mapping of the decision-making process for consideration of the proposed projects. The Provost noted the expectation that large-scale proposals would be brought to UMC by Deans or Directors of Services, involving as appropriate the contribution of Academic Board, and sign-off by Council where necessary. The clarification of such decision-making procedures was part of the reasoning for making public the minutes of UMC, which was the body through which the Provost intended to exercise his delegated authority, as well as the recent diversification of representation on the UMC committee structure.
- Members queried the role of Academic Board in the process, suggesting that an AB sub-group could contribute to the academic review of proposed projects as part of its statutory function in advising Council on academic matters. The Provost noted the need for AB's input into big investment decisions.
- It was agreed that it would be valuable to have a clearer statement of the provenance of the strategy documents as they developed, giving an indication of the bodies or groups who had contributed in the pre-consultation phase. It was noted in some areas of the document, such as the section on mathematics and statistics, there would be many contributors over a number of years as these areas were ongoing projects now described in the papers.
- In response to queries about whether the plans were deliverable under UCL's current financial model, the Provost noted that the proposed investment was relatively modest as a proportion of the institutional turnover and that not all projects set out would be taken forward; this would be the subject of further discussion through the process. The question of UCL's resource allocation model would be further addressed in the Enablers paper.

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

**22 MINUTES OF OTHER COMMITTEES (Paper 3-15)**

22.1 Noted.

**23 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

23.1 The next meeting would be held on **Wednesday 9 February 2022**, 14:05-16:00.

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