



## ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Thursday 3 July 2014

### MINUTES

*PRESENT:*

President and Provost (Chair)

Ms Wendy Appleby  
Mr David Ashton  
Professor David Bogle  
Dame Nicola Brewer  
Professor Steve Caddick  
Dr Brenda Cross  
Dr Caroline Essex  
Dr Julie Evans  
Professor Mike Ewing  
Mr Marco Federighi  
Professor Mary Fulbrook  
Dr Dilly Fung  
Mr Keir Gallagher  
Professor Dame Hazel Genn  
Ms Tracy Herman

Dr Arne Hoffman  
Dr Christine Hoffmann  
Dr Helen Matthews  
Professor Raymond MacAllister  
Professor Alan Penn  
Professor David Price  
Dr Hilary Richards  
Professor Elizabeth Shephard  
Dr Ruth Siddall  
Professor Anthony Smith  
Dr Eva Sorensen  
Dr Olga Thomas  
Professor Alan Thompson  
Mr Ben Towse  
Professor Jo Wolff

In attendance: Mr Jason Clarke (Secretary); Ms Clare Goudy; Ms Judith Hillmore.

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Robert Brown, Ms Leonie Hannan, Professor Graham Hart, Ms Shelia Nuttall, Dr Peter Raven, Ms Soo Ware.

*Key to abbreviations*

AB	Academic Board
AC	Academic Committee
EdCom	Education Committee
JSSC	Joint Staff Student Committee
NSS	National Student Survey
QMEC	Quality Management and Enhancement Committee
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
SSFC	Scholarships and Student Funding Committee
StEF	Student Experience Forum

<b>Preliminary Business</b>
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**23 CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP - RETIRING MEMBERS OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**

***Noted:***

23.1 The following members of AC would be standing down from AC at the end of the current session and in some cases retiring from UCL:

- Professor Richard Catlow, Dean of the Faculty of Mathematical & Physical Sciences;
- Professor Mike Ewing, Dean of Students (Academic);
- Dr Hilary Richards, Faculty Tutor, Faculty of Life Sciences;
- Dr Eva Sorensen, elected non-professorial member of AB;
- Professor Russell Viner, elected professorial member of AB;
- Mr Keir Gallagher, Educations & Campaigns Officer, UCL Union;
- Ms Tracy Herman, Medical, Pharmacy & Health Students' Officer, UCL Union;
- Mr Ben Towse, Postgraduate Students' Officer, UCL Union.

23.2 The Provost thanked the above colleagues for their contributions to the work of AC and to UCL generally, in some cases over many years, and wished them well for the future.

23.3 The Provost paid a special tribute to Professor Ewing for his significant contribution to UCL in his role as Dean of Students (Academic), as Chair of the Education Committee and as Chair of the Quality Management and Enhancement Committee. Professor Ewing had also been Acting Vice-Provost (Education) before Professor Smith had taken up his appointment in January 2012 and had chaired AC during that period. The Provost's comments were endorsed warmly by the Committee.

**24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 8 MAY 2014**

***Reported:***

24.1 The Secretary reported that the UCLU's Postgraduate Students' Officer, Mr Towse, had requested that Minute 21.3.7 be amended as it did not reflect accurately his comments at the previous meeting. It was proposed, therefore, that this minute be amended to read as follows:

One of the UCLU officers expressed concern about the relationship between Professional Services staff and the academic community (including students) being described in terms of 'customer service', when, in his view, Professional Services staff should be seen as 'partners' or 'colleagues' in UCL's academic mission. The Provost observed that this language had been used as it was recognised that in some areas of UCL there was a recognition that the principle of 'customer service' needed to be embedded more deeply

and that UCL needed to provide high-quality and professional services to the academic community. The Provost also observed that UCL should not refer to its students as ‘customers’ as this did not convey the relationship that a university should seek to have with its student body.

The above amendment was approved by AC.

**Confirmed:**

- 24.2 The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 8 May 2014 [AC Mins. 18-22, 08.05.14], subject to the correction noted at Minute 24.1 above.

**25 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES** [see also Minutes 26 and 27 below]

**25A UCL 2034 Strategy** [AC Min.21, 08.05.14]

**Received:**

- 25A.1 An oral update from the Provost on progress with developing the UCL 2034 Strategy.

**Reported:**

- 25A.2 The Strategy document had been revised and reconstructed in light of comments received during the consultation exercise, including the very helpful discussion at the last AC meeting. The updated version of the Strategy would be submitted to Council for approval at its meeting on 8 July 2014. The next stage of the process would be designing and putting in place a effective implementation plan, and work on this had already begun. It was envisaged that the plan would set out a series of objective against the themes in the UCL 2034 Strategy and these would be assigned to a senior officer as the ‘theme leader’ to co-ordinate. It was hoped that, wherever possible, these themes and objectives would be implemented *via* UCL’s existing governance and management structures, without the need to create new structures or bodies. It was also intended that implementation of the UCL 2034 Strategy would be embedded within the standard planning cycle.

<b><i>Business for Discussion</i></b>
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**26 NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY – UPDATE FROM THE VICE-PROVOST (EDUCATION)**

**Received:**

- 26.1 An update report on the NSS at AC 4-15 (13-14), presented by the Vice-Provost (Education), Professor Anthony Smith.

**Reported:**

- 26.2 The report provided a summary of UCL’s performance in the 2013 NSS, the actions taken to follow-up the release of the results, actions taken to enhance UCL’s response rate in the 2014 NSS, and initial plans for the 2015 NSS.
- 26.3 The Vice-Provost (Education) expressed his thanks to Deans, Heads of Departments, and the NSS Liaison Officers for their support in trying to improve UCL’s performance in the NSS, in terms of the response rate and in following-up issues to emerge from the NSS

results in the form of departmental action plans. The provisional response rate for the 2014 NSS was 74%; 12% higher than the previous year. It had yet to be seen whether a higher response would result in improved results for UCL in terms of student satisfaction. A full report on the outcome of the 2014 NSS would be submitted to the first meeting of AC in the 2014-15 session.

- 26.4 It was proposed that from 2014-15 onwards, the NSS Steering Group would be formalised within the UCL committee system, with a reporting line to QMEC.

**Discussion:**

- 26.5 AC commended the Vice-Provost (Education), his office and staff across faculties and departments or their efforts in trying to improve UCL's performance in the NSS. Also, it was noted that addressing some of the issues identified by, or as a result of the analysis of, the NSS results might have resource implications for UCL, either centrally or within faculties.

**RESOLVED:**

- 26.6 That AC welcome the update report on the NSS at AC 4-15 (13-14).

**[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith – to note]**

- 26.7 That an update report on the NSS be submitted to AC at its October 2014 meeting.

**[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith]**

## **27 STUDENT EXPERIENCE FORUM – UPDATE REPORT TO ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**

**Received:**

- 27.1 An update report from the StEF at AC 4-16 (13-14), presented by the Chair of the StEF, Professor Anthony Smith.

**Reported:**

- 27.2 The report provided an overview of the first year of operation of the StEF, including details of its membership, issues addressed in its meetings, and follow-up actions taken.

**Discussion:**

- 27.3 A member, noting that the StEF reviews data gained from the NSS and Student Barometer surveys, expressed a concern that students might be experiencing 'survey fatigue', as they are also invited to complete a range of internal questionnaires. In response, the Director of Education Planning, Ms Goudy, reported that the Office of the Vice-Provost (Education) would be setting up a working group to review UCL's approach to, and use of, student surveys across the institution, and additional staff resource had been secured by the Office to support this work.
- 27.4 It was noted that the importance and value of non-survey-based student feedback mechanisms, in particular Departmental Staff-Student Consultative Committees, should not be overlooked.
- 27.5 It was noted that many of the problems which are identified by students in programme-, department- or faculty-administered surveys are ones which can only be resolved at institutional level. There was also a need for institutional-level bodies to be more responsive

to issues arising from these surveys in terms of agreeing concrete follow-up action to be taken.

**RESOLVED:**

27.6 That AC welcome the update report from the StEF at AC 4-16 (13-14).

**[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith, Ms Judith Hillmore – to note]**

27.7 That a progress report on the work of the working group established to review student surveys be submitted to AC next session.

**[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith]**

**28 STUDENT FEEDBACK DATA OVERVIEW REPORT**

**Received:**

28.1 The sixth Student Data Overview Report at AC 4-17 (13-14), introduced by the Chair of JSSC, Dr Ruth Siddall.

**Reported;**

28.2 The JSSC Chair highlighted three key themes to emerge from the above report:

- Academic support and personal tutoring: there was evidence that the Personal Tutoring Scheme was not working effectively or consistently across UCL. There was also a need for more support and training for Personal Tutors in dealing with particular student-related issues.
- Teaching and learning spaces and timetabling: although fewer concerns had been expressed in relation to this matter than in previous years, this remained a serious concern for students, with many reporting overcrowding in lecture theatres and a lack of study spaces in the library.
- Assessment and feedback: this remained an issue for students. The survey data overall was stable on this issue, although the NSS average score was lagging behind a steadily improving average score across the sector as a whole.

The JSSC Chair thanked Mr Rob Traynor, the JSSC Secretary, for his hard work in trying to collate and analyse the various forms of student feedback data in order to compile the annual report.

**Discussion:**

28.3 On the Personal Tutor Scheme, it was noted that responsibility for overseeing the Scheme rested with the EdCom. AC noted the importance of providing effective academic guidance and pastoral support to students, and asked that EdCom review the operation of the Personal Tutor Scheme in the next session (possibly as part of the Connected Curriculum initiative) including identifying existing examples of departmental good practice, and report back to AC on steps to be taken to improve its effectiveness.

28.4 On teaching and learning spaces, the Provost noted that he had convened and chaired a working group which had been meeting weekly for the last two terms to identify some immediate steps that could be taken to address this issue. As a result, UCL and Birkbeck had agreed to enter into an agreement for the shared use of teaching space. Also, UCL had

recently succeeded in acquiring Bidborough House, which comprised ready-to-use office space which would enable Professional Services staff to relocate from the main site, thus releasing a significant amount of space for teaching and learning and other academic activities. These were first steps in a major plan to address a legacy of under-investment in UCL's estate, especially its facilities for teaching and learning. The longer term solution to those issues would be the development at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, which would see a major transformation of the UCL estate.

- 28.5 The question was raised of whether the introduction of deposits or pre-payment of fees for postgraduate-taught students would assist in student number planning, as it would deter non-serious applications. It was agreed that there were a number of issues which this would raise, including the possible disincentive to students from poorer backgrounds, which would need to be considered carefully. It was agreed that the Scholarships and Student Funding Committee should consider UCL's policy on this, taking note of practice elsewhere in the sector, and report back to AC in due course.

**RESOLVED:**

- 28.6 That AC welcome the sixth Student Data Overview Report at AC 4-17 (13-14).

**[ACTION: Dr Ruth Siddall, Mr Rob Traynor – to note]**

- 28.7 That EdCom review the operation of the Personal Tutor Scheme in session 2014-15 and report back to AC.

**[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith, Ms Sandra Hinton]**

- 28.8 That the SSFC review the issue of pre-payment of fees or deposits by postgraduate-taught students, taking note of practice in other universities, and report back to AC.

**[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith, Mr Rob Traynor]**

**29 CONNECTED CURRICULUM – TRANSFORMING EDUCATION AT UCL**

**Received:**

- 29.1 A paper on the above at AC 4-18 (13-14), presented by the Director of CALT, Dr Dilly Fung.

**Reported:**

- 29.2 In introducing the paper, the Director of CALT outlined: the principles behind the idea of 'research-based education' and how it could be defined; the Connected Curriculum, which would provide a flexible means whereby faculties and departments could apply the idea of 'research-based education' to their own programmes of study; and the various implications of the initiative for UCL.

- 29.3 It was proposed that the initiative would be taken forward by a steering group of EdCom, which would then, in turn, report to AC on progress.

**Discussion:**

- 29.4 There was strong support within AC for the Connected Curriculum initiative and the paper was endorsed, with the following caveats: it would be important for academic staff in departments to feel that they own the initiative and that this is not something which is being imposed on them 'from above'; examples of existing departmental good practice are recognised and disseminated more widely; that there is sufficient flexibility built into the

scheme so that genuine pedagogical differences between disciplines can be recognised and a rigid uniformity is not imposed on faculties and departments.

- 29.5 The Provost commended the paper and noted that the Connected Curriculum initiative was a key element in taking forward the UCL 2034 Strategy.

**RESOLVED:**

- 29.6 That AC approve the paper at AC 4-18 (13-14) and the proposals contained therein.

**[ACTION: Dr Dilly Fung – to note]**

### **30 REVAMP OF THE UCL INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY**

**Received:**

- 30.1 An oral report from the Vice-Provost (International), Dame Nicola Brewer, on the revamp of the UCL International Strategy.

**Reported:**

- 30.2 In her oral report, the Vice-Provost (International) noted that since her appointment she had held discussions about UCL's current and future International Strategy with a range of external and internal stakeholders. Key themes or issues to emerge in those discussions included, *inter alia*, the following:

- the need to identify the international dimensions of other UCL strategies and initiatives, such as Global Citizenship, work-based learning *etc*;
- the need to integrate the student experience more fully into the International Strategy;
- raising awareness of UCL's current range of international activities;
- ensuring that all of UCL's international activities were consistent with UCL's core values and principles;
- the need for more effective mapping of UCL's international activities and links at department-, faculty-, and institutional-level.

- 30.3 The Vice-Provost (International) and her staff would be reflecting on the above issues over the summer, before consulting with the UCL community (eg in a number of town hall meetings) on the principles and objectives for a revamped International Strategy.

**Discussion:**

- 30.4 AC welcomed the update report from the Vice-Provost (International) and looked forward to the next stage in updating the International Strategy.

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**31 ANNUAL MONITORING – REPORT FROM THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE**

***Received:***

- 31.1 A report from QMEC on the outcomes of the latest Annual Monitoring cycle at AC 4-19 (13-14), introduced by the Chair of QMEC, Professor Mike Ewing.

***Reported:***

- 31.2 The QMEC Chair highlighted three key themes to emerge from the above report: inadequacy of teaching space; the general quality of central teaching rooms; and issues relating to overcrowding and timetabling.
- 31.3 A greater number of concerns were being expressed by departments in relation to the quality of teaching spaces and the poor state of repair of some teaching rooms.
- 31.4 The QMEC Chair noted further that QMEC had for some years sought to establish, with limited success, a constructive dialogue with Estates on these issues. This had not been helped but a perceived reluctance on the part of some senior staff in Estates to engage in a meaningful way with the Committee and the concerns being raised by departments. This, in turn, led to a sense of frustration among staff at departmental level that raising issues *via* Annual Monitoring did not appear to result in corresponding action being taken at institutional level. However, the most recent meeting with the newly-appointed Director of Estates Portfolio & Business Services had been more positive and boded well for the future.

***Discussion:***

- 31.5 Several members of AC supported the concerns which had been raised by QMEC in its report and the comments from the QMEC Chair about the issue of communication with the Estates Division.
- 31.6 The Provost noted that he was acutely aware of the problems relating to the UCL estate and that this had been at the top of his personal agenda since taking up his post at the start of the session. He referred AC to the earlier discussion and the steps that he had already taken since his appointment to address the serious estates-related challenges facing UCL, especially in relation to teaching spaces. He noted further that UCL was investing next year £144,000,000 in its estate, although this alone would not be sufficient to make good the decades of under-investment in the estate. The need for more effective communication with the whole of the UCL community about estates-related matters was recognised and he would reflect on that further with the senior officers concerned.

***RESOLVED:***

- 31.7 That AC welcome the report from QMEC on the outcomes of the latest Annual Monitoring cycle at AC 4-19 (13-14)

***[ACTION: Professor Mike Ewing, Ms Sandra Hinton – to note]***



**32 SCHOLARSHIPS AND STUDENT FUNDING COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2012-13**

***Received:***

- 32.1 The annual report from SSFC for session 2012-13<sup>1</sup> at AC 4-20 (13-14), introduced by the Chair of SSFC, Professor Anthony Smith.

***Discussed:***

- 32.2 The Provost noted that the creation of a UCL endowment fund would be a major step in improving financial support to UCL's students and he was actively engaged in taking this forward.

***RESOLVED:***

- 32.3 That AC welcome the annual report from SSFC for session 2012-13 at AC 4-20 (13-14).

***[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith, Mr Rob Traynor – to note]***

<p><b><i>Business for Formal Approval</i></b></p>
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**33 REVISED PROCEDURE FOR THE APPROVAL OF A NEW DEGREE AWARD TITLES**

***Received:***

- 33.1 Earlier in the session, EdCom agreed that it was necessary and timely to review UCL's current procedure for the scrutiny and approval of requests for the creation of new degree award titles. EdCom invited the Programme and Module Approval Steering Group to consider the matter. At its meeting on 19 June 2014, EdCom approved, on the recommendation of PMASG, a revised procedure, which is being submitted to AC for formal approval. The procedure was at AC 4-21 (13-14).

***Approved:***

- 33.2 AC approved formally, on the recommendation of EdCom, the revised procedure for the approval of new degree award titles at AC 4-21 (13-14).

***[ACTION: Professor Mike Ewing, Ms Sandra Hinton, Ms Irenie Morley – to note]***

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<sup>1</sup> The report had been due to be received by AC at its March 2014 meeting, which was cancelled. It had then been held over from the May 2014 meeting as that meeting had been devoted to a discussion of the UCL 2034 Strategy and the SSFC Chair had been abroad at the time.

<b>Business for Information</b>
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**34 ANNUAL REPORT FROM EDUCATION COMMITTEE TO COUNCIL ON NEW PROGRAMMES OF STUDY APPROVED IN 2012-13**

***Received:***

- 34.1 At AC 4-22 (13-14), for information, a copy of the above report which would be received by Council at its meeting on 8 July 2014.

**35 ACADEMIC PROMOTION AND REWARD REVIEW GROUP**

***Noted:***

- 35.1 An Academic Promotion and Reward Review Group, reporting to the Human Resources Policy Committee, had been established to review UCL's existing promotion and reward processes. The note at AC 4-23 (13-14) set out a timetable for the Group's work.

**36 REPORTS OF SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS ETC OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**

***Noted:***

- 36.1 The AC officers had received on behalf of AC, since the last meeting of AC, Minutes of the following:
- Education Committee (14 May 2014);
  - Quality Management and Enhancement Committee (15 April 2014);
  - Research Degrees Committee (5 March 2014);
  - Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee (10 March 2014).

**37 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**37A Secretary to AC**

***Reported:***

- 37A.1 The Provost noted that this was Mr Clarke's last meeting of AC as Secretary, as he would be leaving UCL at the end of the month to take up the post of Chief Operating Officer & Registrar at the Conservatoire for Dance & Drama. On behalf of the Committee, the Provost thanked Mr Clarke for his work as Secretary and wished him well in his new post.

**38 DATES OF MEETINGS IN SESSION 2014-15**

***Noted:***

38.1 Meeting dates for session 2014-15 would be confirmed shortly.

**Secretarial Note:** *since the meeting, AC meetings in session 2014-15 have been scheduled as follows:*

- 16 October 2014;
- 18 December 2014;
- 12 March 2015;
- 7 May 2015;
- 25 June 2015.

*Meetings have been scheduled for 9am-11am. Venues will be confirmed in due course.*

JASON CLARKE

Secretary to Academic Committee

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