

**Academic Committee
Extraordinary Meeting**

Tuesday 3 November 2020 at 11:00am

Minutes**Present Members:**

President and Provost (Chair); Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Paul Ayris; Mr Ayman Benmati; Professor David Bogle; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Professor Jon Butterworth; Dr Celia Caulcott; Ms Yasmeen Daoud; Mr Ashley Doolan; Professor Piet Eeckhout; Professor Mark Emberton; Dr Julie Evans; Professor Dame Hazel Genn; Dr Hugh Goodacre; Professor Graham Hart; Dr Christine Hoffmann; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Christoph Lindner; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Helen Matthews; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Hynek Pikhart; Professor Geraint Rees; Dr Aeli Roberts; Professor Sue Rogers; Professor Sasha Roseneil; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Justin Siefker; Professor David Shanks; Dr Hazel Smith; Dr Eleanor Tillett; Professor Olga Thomas; Professor Alan Thompson; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker

Attendees:

Dr Clare Goudy, Provost's Office
Ms Anne Marie O'Mullane, Academic Services

Apologies:

Professor David Lomas; Dr Meera Nath Sarin; Dr Ruth Siddall

Officer:

Ms Rachel Port

Part I: Matter for Discussion**1. The Temporary Operating Model for Academic Year 2020-21 (Paper 1-01)**

- 1.1. At the start of the meeting, the Chair thanked members for attending the meeting at short notice. It had been arranged in light of the urgent need to clarify and approve the proposed Temporary Operating Model (TOM) at UCL for Terms 2 and 3 this session so that our staff, students and partners could plan accordingly. The Chair noted that this was the first meeting of Academic Committee (AC) this session and welcomed all members and in particular the

new members.

- 1.2. Professor Geraint Rees, Pro-Vice-Provost (AI) and Dean of the Faculty of Life Sciences, introduced the paper setting out proposals for arrangements for UCL staff and students in Terms 2 and 3 in the academic year 2020-21. The key points made were:
 - a. It was acknowledged that the first TOM for Term 1 in 2020-21 session approved by AC at its Special Meeting held in May 2020 had created a significant challenge for all colleagues in moving core teaching content to online delivery in a short space of time. It was considered that a decision now needed to be taken about the TOM for Terms 2 and 3 this session as COVID-19 infections were increasing nationally and there were ongoing restrictions on gatherings, social distancing and international travel.
 - b. It was noted that the government had announced a national lockdown in England to commence on 5 November 2020 until 2 December 2020. However, it was not clear if the restrictions would extend beyond the proposed end date or if another lockdown might come into force in the Spring. Therefore, it was particularly difficult to forecast the external environment in Terms 2 and 3. In light of this, UCL needed a TOM that was flexible to respond to the changing situation that would allow, for example, staff and students to undertake increased or decreased face to face teaching.
 - c. The proposed TOM for Terms 2 and 3 had been prepared by the Academic Planning Group and it had been approved by the Education and Operations Delivery Group while the educational recommendations had been approved by Education Committee (EdCom) last week. It had also been endorsed by the Provost's SMT and subject to AC approval, it would go out for consultation with the Trades Unions this week.
 - d. The proposed TOM included 17 recommendations. Recommendations 1-6 were educational that had been approved by EdCom, and were:
 - i. To continue the current TOM where students could study on campus or remotely.
 - ii. For Terms 2 and 3 continue online teaching as well as an average of 1-2 hours of face to face activity, where that continued to be safely possible and feasible.
 - iii. Monitor take up of face to face teaching by students and delivery by staff in Term 1 to assess whether any change might be required to the use of our teaching and learning spaces.
 - iv. Continue to keep student visa route (formerly Tier 4) implications under close review, noting that at present we can continue to deliver distance learning as long as we plan to move to face to face teaching "when circumstances allow".
 - v. Complete timetabling for Terms 2 and 3 on the same devolved basis as for Term 1.

- vi. Confirmation that there would be no face to face invigilated examinations in 2020-21 session and that they would be conducted online. The feasibility of time-limited examination for some subjects would be explored.
- e. Recommendations 7-9 set out the implications for continuing the TOM into Terms 2 and 3 for practical classes, projects or other activities that were deferred from Term 1 into Terms 2 and 3. These activities would need to be reviewed and alternative provision be instituted.
- f. It was recommended that fieldwork could continue provided it had been risk assessed and approved. Also, student laboratory or practice-based projects take place on campus where they were an essential part of the curriculum, so long as they could be accommodated.
- g. In relation to students returning home, the government had advised students to not move around the country and some students would need to stay in UCL accommodation over the Christmas closure period. UCL was developing plans in connection with this issue as at recommendations 10 and 11.
- h. In relation to antigen testing at recommendations 12 and 13, UCL had a low level of infections at present but it was proposed that UCL continue its PCR (antigen) testing and consider what extensions might be possible and feasible in Terms 2 and 3.
- i. Although the current operating model was temporary, UCL did not know how long it would be needed. Therefore, UCL was taking into account the likely continuation of the TOM throughout the current session in its academic planning for 2021-22 session as at recommendation 14.
- j. Research and innovation was equally important to UCL and the normal operation of research groups and laboratories was not possible and therefore some innovation and enterprise activity had been curtailed. The impact on academic careers was recognised and it was intended that guidance and support for academic and research staff be brought forward next term.
- k. It was also noted that there had been a major shift in the availability of research funding from charitable funders which had the potential to disproportionality affect Early Career Researchers (ECRs). It was intended that the Research and External Engagement Delivery (REED) Group plus UCL Innovation and Enterprise would bring forward plans to address the impacts on academic careers; work would also be undertaken to develop lead indicators that provide indications of possible fall in research volume and/or quality plus innovation activity as at recommendations 15 and 16.
- l. As set out at recommendation 17, it was intended that the Provost's Leadership Forum (or similar) be used to solicit feedback and advice on major lessons learnt on implementation of the TOM later this term.

1.3. The following points were made in discussion:

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- a. The Provost commended the TOM which was a very thorough and complete piece of work.
- b. The Doctoral School were keen to be involved in work in relation to ECRs.
- c. It was noted that the impact of the past year on ECRs would be that some might not apply for promotion. It was intended that this be picked up in recommendation 15 as various groups would look at the job market for ECRs and feed into academic planning for next session.
- d. In relation to the first two points under the “Teaching and Learning” plans shown on page 2 of the TOM that set out the group and educational activities that might be offered where it was possible and safe to do so, it was noted that they had formed a single point under the previous TOM. While lab based activities were essential for some programmes for example, this point had been separated out to show that there was no uniform delivery of enrichment activities across UCL.
- e. It was considered that the TOM was a very good document and would be appreciated by both staff and students.
- f. In relation to time-limited exams, colleagues in mathematical and physical sciences disciplines were still expecting that those could take place in 2020-21 as they formed an important part of their programmes. Other faculties were also keen on having time-limited exams and it was reported that EdCom would look at an operating model for such exams at its December meeting.
- g. It was suggested that the fact that staff were not required to undertake face to face teaching if they were not comfortable doing so, should be clearly stated in the document. This could also help with consultation with the TUs.
- h. It was noted that the approach remained the same in that staff were not being compelled to come to campus. However, some parts of the institution such as the Biological Services Unit did not have that choice. It was intended that the TOM be phrased in such a way in that it was flexible but recognised that staff groups differed with different responsibilities.
- i. The Provost reaffirmed that staff would not be compelled to come to campus and especially in light of the current national lockdown. However, he had received letters from staff who wished for face to face teaching to continue, and for more to be offered, as students were enjoying it. This was considered to be a mistake currently as UCL had a moral responsibility for students on campus, especially now that they could not move around the country during lockdown. Nevertheless, some face to face activity was important for student mental health.
- j. It was noted that queries had been received from Chinese students on some PGT programmes of study who were studying remotely as if no face to face teaching was received on their whole programme, there could be problems in their programme being recognised by the Chinese government. This was considered to be an important issue and there were likely to be country specific requirements about face to face teaching.

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- k. In terms of academic planning for 2021-22, it was noted that UCL could not physically accommodate the current student cohort on campus. This issue was part of a broader strategic direction that was out of the scope of the TOM.
- l. The Provost commended the TOM to AC and expressed his thanks to Professor Rees for his excellent leadership in leading the development of the model, as well as to all other colleagues involved in its formation and for taking forward its recommendations.

1.4. **AC agreed:**

- a. **That the proposed Teaching Operating Model at UCL for Terms 2 and 3 for academic year 2020-21 be approved.**

Ms Rachel Port
Secretary to Academic Committee
November 2020