



## ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Thursday 9 May 2013

### MINUTES

*PRESENT:*

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Mr David Ashton	Professor David Bogle
Professor Robert Brown	Mr Edwin Clifford-Coupe
Dr Brenda Cross	Dr Caroline Essex
Dr Julie Evans	Professor Mike Ewing
Mr Marco Federighi	Professor David Green
Dr Leonie Hannan	Dr Christine Hoffmann
Dr Arne Hofmann	Dr Helen Matthews
Mr Dante Micheaux	Professor Alan Penn
Mr Tim Perry	Dr Peter Raven
Professor Elizabeth Shephard	Dr Ruth Siddall
Ms Olga Thomas	Ms Susan Ware

In attendance: Ms Karen Barnard [*for Minute 39*]; Mr Jason Clarke (Secretary) and Ms Harriet Lilley.

Apologies for absence were received from Dr Paul Ayris, Professor Steve Caddick, Ms Geraldine Davies, Ms Judith Hillmore, Professor Raymond MacAllister, Dr Eva Sorensen, Dr Hilary Richards, Ms Mary Rimington and Professor Jonathan Wolff.

*Key to abbreviations*

AC	Academic Committee
ASSPSG	Admissions Structures and Selection Processes Steering Group
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
GPA	Grade Point Average
HE	Higher Education
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
ISB	International Strategy Board
JSSC	Joint Staff Student Committee
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
PG	Postgraduate
QMEC	Quality Management and Enhancement Committee
DSSCC	Departmental Staff Student Consultative Committee
SPS	Student Psychological Services
StRAC	Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee
StEF	Student Experience Forum
SWWG	Student Welfare Working Group
UG	Undergraduate

**36 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 21 MARCH 2013**

***Approved:***

- 36.1 The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 21 March 2013 [AC Mins. 26-35, 21.03.13].

**37 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**37A UCL Access Agreement 2014-15** [AC Min.28, 21.03.13]

***Noted:***

- 37A.1 The UCL Access Agreement for 2014-15, which was approved by AC at its last meeting, was subsequently submitted to OFFA.

- 37A.2 The AC Chair was exploring the issue of the misalignment of student accommodation payments with Student Loan Company payments, and would report back to AC in due course.

**37B Working Group on GPA** [AC Min.33, 21.03.13]

***Noted:***

- 37B.1 The final report from the Working Group, including information on the outcome of the GPA modelling exercise, would be submitted to AC at its next meeting.

**38 REVIEW OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE AND ITS SUBSTRUCTURE** [AC Min.27A, 21.03.13]

***Noted:***

- 38.1 At its last meeting, AC noted that discussions were taking place between the AC and other officers regarding the most appropriate structures that could be put in place to fill the two main gaps in the coverage of AC's current committee substructure which had been identified during the AC review *ie* student recruitment and admissions and student experience.

- 38.2 A progress report from the AC officers on the above discussions was at AC 4-19 (12-13), and was introduced by the AC Chair.

***Reported:***

- 38.3 Following, and in light of, their discussions with a number of colleagues, the AC officers were proposing the creation of (i) a new formal committee to oversee UCL's student marketing, recruitment, outreach and admissions activities and (ii) an informal management group to advise the Vice-Provost (Education)/AC Chair on actions to be taken to enhance the student experience. The proposed Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee (StRAC) would report to AC, be chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education), include representation from faculties, departments and Professional Services, and would meet termly. Council would need to approve the creation of StRAC as this would be a formal committee of UCL. The Student Experience Forum (StEF), which would also be chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education), would include representation from faculties, heads of relevant Professional Services divisions, UCL Union, and both the Dean of Students (Academic) and the Dean of Students (Welfare), in order to enable full discussion of student experience issues from a range of perspectives.

**Discussion:**

- 38.4 AC broadly welcomed the proposals from the AC officers for the establishment of the two new groups, which would redress two deficiencies in the existing structures relating to these two important areas of policy and activity.
- 38.5 The following specific comments were also noted by AC members:
- If Council were to approve the creation of StRAC, then the terms of reference of AC, EdCom and RDC would need to be amended accordingly.
  - It was suggested that the StEF should include representation from (i) the UCL Careers Service and (ii) UCL alumni.
  - AC members were pleased to note that the heads of relevant Professional Services divisions were proposed as members of the new StEF, especially in light of recent issues concerning operations and resources affecting the student experience, especially estates-related issues.
  - Although the proposed membership for both StEF and StRAC included faculty representatives (three Deans and three Faculty Tutors, one from each School), the view was expressed that as each faculty has particular issues which it has to address, all faculties should, therefore, be represented on those groups.
  - It was noted that the Chair of the ASSPSG was the Vice-Provost (Operations) and not the Dean of Students (Academic) as stated at paragraph 10 of the report.
- 38.6 It was agreed that the AC officers would reflect on the points which had been raised and that the Chair would take action on behalf of AC to approve the final proposals for the StRAC and StEF which would be submitted to Council for, respectively, approval and information at its meeting in July.

**RESOLVED:**

- 38.7 That (i) AC approve the report at [AC 4-19 \(12-13\)](#); (ii) the AC officers review the proposals set out in the report in light of the points raised by AC during its discussion, with a view to the AC Chair taking action on behalf of AC to approve any revisions to those proposals; (iii) the final proposals be submitted to Council at its meeting in July 2013 for approval or information as appropriate.

**[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith, Mr Jason Clarke]**

**39 LEAD OFFICER REPORT – CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY**

*[Ms Karen Barnard, Director of the Careers Service, was in attendance for this item]*

**Noted:**

- 39.1 The Lead Officer report on Careers and Employability at [AC 4-20 \(12-13\)](#), introduced by the Director of the Careers Service.

**Reported:**

- 39.2 The Director of the Careers Service noted the following in her Lead Officer Report:

- The Careers Service has provided undergraduate students with an offer of careers support before they arrive at UCL and this has received positive feedback. It was anticipated that a similar support system would also be provided to Masters students. Representatives from the Careers Service had also attended a number of Departmental Staff Student Consultative Committee meetings.
- Specialist careers support and employer-led programmes had been provided to (i) the Faculties of Laws and Engineering Sciences, which had given employers the

opportunity to engage directly with staff and students; and (ii) postdoctoral students across UCL.

- A Placement Manager had been appointed to manage placements for students on the BAsC Programme, as well as PhD student placements. The Manager will also liaise with departments regarding formal and informal placements for their students.
- The hands-on Talent Bank project which was piloted this year and which aims to match jobs to students, and the Grad Club, now in its second year of providing support to UCL alumni, had both received positive feedback.
- There had been a significant increase in the number of users of the Careers Service and its workshops since 2011-12.
- The UCL Careers Service would be re-launched as UCL Careers in September 2013.

**Discussion:**

- 39.3 AC members noted the serious issue of unpaid internships and were pleased to note that the Careers Service was proactive in ensuring that (i) no unpaid internships were advertised by them, and (ii) all internships paid at least the UK minimum wage (unless they were being offered by a charity or statutory body).
- 39.4 AC members noted that the HESA data at Appendix B of the Lead Officer Report for PG and UG students was captured at different times and agreed that it would be useful to compare UCL's data with that of other UK HEIs.

**RESOLVED:**

- 39.5 That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Careers and Employability at AC 4-20 (12-13).

**[ACTION: Ms Karen Barnard, Mr Tim Perry (as Secretary to Council) – to note]**

## **40 LEAD OFFICER REPORT – STUDENT ACCOMMODATION**

**Noted:**

- 40.1 The Lead Officer report on Student Accommodation at AC 4-21 (12-13).

**Discussion:**

- 40.2 The Dean of Students (Welfare) and the Education and Campaigns Officer, UCL Union, on behalf of the UCL Union, both observed that they were not in favour of the 4% average increase in accommodation costs for UCL's students, which was referred to in the report. It was noted that UCL had some of the highest student accommodation costs in the UK and that, in the view of many members of AC, UCL should offer student accommodation at cost price, rather than at market rates. Members of AC also noted that student accommodation should not be viewed as simply a part of the estate to be managed, but as an integral contribution to the quality of the student experience.
- 40.3 The Dean of Students (Welfare) and the Education and Campaigns Officer, UCL Union, also noted concerns regarding the organisational change noted in the report, which they argued would lead to a reduction in the number of front-line staff within the Student Accommodation Office who were crucial for the effective day-to-day management of the student residences, including dealing with emergency situations.
- 40.4 The Chair noted that Mr William Wilson, the Director of Student Accommodation, had been expected to attend the meeting to speak to the report. If members had any other questions

relating to the report, then these should be sent to the AC Secretary who would refer them on to Mr Wilson for reply.

**RESOLVED:**

40.5 That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Student Accommodation at AC 4-21 (12-13).

**[ACTION: Mr William Wilson, Mr Tim Perry (as Secretary to Council) – to note]**

40.6 That AC members send any questions arising from the above report to the AC Secretary for forwarding to the Director of Student Accommodation for reply.

**[ACTION: AC members, Mr Jason Clarke]**

## **41 LEAD OFFICER REPORT – STUDENT WELFARE CO-ORDINATION**

**Noted:**

41.1 The Lead Officer report on Student Welfare Co-ordination at AC 4-22 (12-13), introduced by the Dean of Students (Welfare).

**Reported**

41.2 In her oral report, the Dean of Students (Welfare) noted the following main issues:

- There had been an increase in the number of students registering with, and requesting support from, Student Psychological Services. Due to the annual increase in demand for SPS's services, UCL now had the highest number of students requesting support for mental health out of all UK HEIs, which was not only a major concern, but also becoming increasingly unmanageable. It was noted that most cases seen by SPS related to general anxiety disorders.
- There was still concern regarding the future of the Gower Place Practice, for which the lease was due to expire in 2014 (although students for the 2013-14 session were still being advised to register at the Practice upon arrival at UCL). 90% of the UCL student population were registered at the Practice and it provided significant student support, and should not be lost.
- The UCL Union Rights and Advice Centre had experienced a significant increase in the number of students seeking its advice, particularly since the Centre took on the Batch Scheme for visa extensions from the UCL International Office in September 2011. Current staffing levels at the Centre needed to be increased in order to cope with the increased demand from UCL students for its services.

41.3 The Dean of Students (Welfare) noted that the Reverend Jenny Walsh, the Anglican Chaplain, had now left UCL, and thanked her for her huge contribution to UCL.

**Discussion:**

41.4 AC members discussed concerns regarding the increase in students requesting support for mental health issues, and noted the following:

- Reasons for the increase would need to be investigated further, as it was not clear whether this was simply a function of factors such as an increase in the number of students willing to disclose that they have mental health issues, greater numbers of students being referred to SPS for support, or the general increase in the overall student population at UCL. It was agreed that the Student Welfare Working Group should investigate this issue further, in particular (i) the main issues raised by

students at SPS, and (ii) the numbers of students seeking SPS support broken down by Faculty, in order to see how UCL could better support students at departmental and faculty level.

- A number of students self-refer to SPS rather than initially discussing issues with their personal tutor or other departmental staff, which meant that departments were not always aware of issues and could not therefore provide additional help for their students.
- More international students were seeking support from SPS, and this was in some cases due to experiences of social isolation.
- Some postgraduate-taught students had chosen to undertake a Masters programme due to the economic climate and lower employment prospects, and may not have been fully prepared for requirements of such programmes, which in some cases may have led to students experiencing stress and anxiety.
- The International Student Orientation Programme, which addressed a range of issues including social isolation, and the existing undergraduate and postgraduate induction 'tool kits', should be reviewed and if necessary enhanced, so that students are aware from the outset of their time at UCL of what they should expect from a university education (which in many cases may be very different from their previous educational experiences), and from where they should first seek advice and support if they experience difficulties.

41.5 AC members noted the following regarding the Gower Place Practice:

- The UCL Union Education and Welfare Officer reported that the UCL Union was organising a campaign and petition to save the Gower Place Practice and had formally written to the Vice-Provost (Operations) regarding the future of the Practice.
- It was disappointing that the UCL Masterplan did not provide an alternative space for the Practice, especially given its importance to the student population.
- The Practice was essential when dealing with students with special needs, especially during exams.

**RESOLVED:**

41.6 That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Student Welfare Co-ordination at AC 4-22 (12-13).

***[ACTION: Dr Ruth Siddall, Mr Tim Perry (as Secretary to Council) – to note]***

41.7 That the SWWG investigate further (i) the main issues raised by students at SPS, and (ii) data on students seeking SPS support broken down by faculty, in order to see how UCL could better support students at departmental and faculty level.

***[ACTION: Dr Ruth Siddall, as Chair of the SWWG]***

41.8 That the AC Chair, in liaison with the Head of the Graduate School and the Director of Student Services, review the induction 'tool kits' for postgraduate and undergraduate students.

***[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith, with Professor David Bogle and Mr David Ashton]***

## **42 STUDENT FEEDBACK DATA OVERVIEW REPORT**

***Noted:***

42.1 The fifth Student Data Overview Report at AC 4-23 (12-13), introduced by the Dean of Students (Welfare), as Chair of JSSC.

**Reported:**

42.2 The Chair of JSSC highlighted the following key concerns which had been raised in the Student Feedback Data Overview Report:

- Data suggested that (i) students had differing perceptions of what constituted feedback on work, and (ii) not all assessed student work was returned in line with the UCL Service Standard (*ie* within one calendar month of the deadline).
- Issues with teaching and learning spaces at UCL, in particular overcrowding, were still being raised at SSCC meetings and had been highlighted by a number of faculties.
- Student feedback data noted concerns regarding organisation and timetabling issues at departmental level.

**Discussion:**

42.3 In relation to the issue of organisation and timetabling at departmental level, AC members noted the following:

- it was sometimes difficult to find academic regulations and related material on the UCL web pages and that current systems were not user-friendly. It was noted by the AC Secretary and the Director of Student Services that work was being undertaken to improve the quality and accessibility of information on the Registry & Academic Services web pages.
- Cross-faculty programmes were particularly difficult to timetable, especially given the choice of modules available to students.

42.4 The AC Chair noted that the report from the JSSC reinforced the need to establish the StEF so that senior managers could discuss, agree and co-ordinate management action in response to the sorts of issues which were raised *via* reports such as the Student Feedback Data Overview Report.

**RESOLVED:**

42.5 That AC approve the Student Feedback Data Overview Report at AC 4-23 (12-13).

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

**43 INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY BOARD – REPORT FOR SESSION 2012-13**

**Noted:**

43.1 The report on the work of the ISB in session 2012-13 at AC 4-24 (12-13), which was being submitted to Council *via* AC.

**Discussion:**

43.2 AC members noted that, in light of discussions above concerning international students, the ISB might wish to review how the international student experience is addressed within the scope of the International Strategy.

43.3 AC members requested further clarification regarding ISB discussions noted at paragraph 4.2 of the report at AC 4-24 (12-13), which noted that future international and overseas collaborations and partnerships should be guided more by strategy than financial considerations.

**RESOLVED:**

- 43.4 That AC approve the report from the ISB for session 2012-13 at AC 4-24 (12-13).

**[ACTION: Mr Gary Hawes (as Secretary to ISB),  
Mr Tim Perry (as Secretary to Council) – to note]**

- 43.5 That the ISB officers be invited to clarify and expand on paragraph 4.2 of the report, as set out in Minute 43.3 above.

**[ACTION: Mr Simon Mellis, Mr Gary Hawes]**

**44 ACADEMIC COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP ON PROGRAMME REVIEW**

**Noted:**

- 44.1 Further to (i) the commitments made in the Council White Paper 2011-21 regarding programme review and (ii) a recommendation from QMEC following its review of the IQR process last session that a review also be conducted of UCL's programme review processes, on 12 December 2012 the AC Chair approved, on behalf of AC, the establishment of a working group of AC to review UCL's current processes for programme review *ie* Annual Monitoring and Augmented Annual Monitoring. The Working Group would submit its report to AC at its next meeting. The terms of reference and membership of the Working Group were, for information, at AC 4-25 (12-13).

**Reported:**

- 44.2 The AC Chair reported that the Working Group on Programme Review had met twice and had made good progress in identifying ways in which the current AM and AugAM processes could be streamlined and made more user-friendly. It was currently envisaged that a new annual and periodic process for programme review would be piloted in the MAPS Faculty during the next academic session.

**45 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

**45A QAA consultation on a risk-based approach to quality assurance of HE in England**

**Reported:**

- 45A.1 The AC Chair reported that the QAA had issued a consultation document proposing a more risk-based approach to the quality assurance of universities. UCL had been doubtful as to whether the QAA's proposals represented a meaningful shift to a risk-based approach and this had been reflected in its response to the QAA's consultation exercise. The outcome of the QAA's consultation would be announced over the summer.

**45B Continuing Professional Development and Short Courses**

**Reported:**

- 45B.1 The AC Chair noted that following a recent UCL 'town hall' meeting regarding CPD and short courses, AC approval was being sought for the establishment of an AC working group to investigate the development of a light-touch process for the approval of CPD and short courses at UCL.



**RESOLVED:**

45B.2 That AC approve the creation of an AC working group to develop a light-touch process for the approval of CPD and short courses at UCL; that terms of reference and membership for the Working Group be drawn-up for approval by AC or, if necessary, the AC Chair on behalf of the Committee.

**[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith]**

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

**Noted:**

46.1 The AC officers had received on behalf of AC, since the last meeting of AC, Minutes of the following:

- Education Committee - 12 March 2013;
- Joint Staff Student Committee - 21 February 2013;
- Quality Management and Enhancement Committee - 9 April 2013;
- Scholarships and Student Funding Committee - 19 March 2013;
- Working Group on Programme Review – 13 February 2013.

**47 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Noted:**

47.1 The next meeting will be on **Thursday 4 July 2013 at 9.00am** in the **Old Refectory**.

JDC  
June 2013