ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Tuesday 10 December 2013

MINUTES

PRESENT:
Professor Mike Ewing (Acting Chair)[1]

Provost and President	Dr Arne Hofmann
Mr David Ashton	Dr Helen Matthews
Dr Paul Ayris	Professor Alan Penn
Professor David Bogle	Mr Tim Perry
Dr Caroline Essex	Dr Hilary Richards
Dr Julie Evans	Professor Elizabeth Shepherd
Mr Marco Federighi	Dr Ruth Siddall
Professor Anthony Finkelstein	Dr Eva Sorensen
Professor Mary Fulbrook	Ms Olga Thomas
Dr Dilly Fung	Mr Ben Towse
Mr Keir Gallagher	Professor Gabriella Vigliocco
Ms Tracy Herman	(*vice* Professor Alan Thompson)
Dr Christine Hoffmann	Ms Soo Ware

In attendance: Mr Jason Clarke (Secretary); Ms Clare Goudy; Ms Judith Hillmore; Mr Peter Murray; Dr Hazel Smith.

Apologies for absence were received from: Professor Robert Brown; Professor Steve Caddick; Professor Richard Catlow; Professor Dame Hazel Genn; Ms Leonie Hannan; Professor Graham Hart; Professor David Price; Ms Mary Rimington; Professor Anthony Smith; Professor Jonathan Wolff.

Key to abbreviations	
AC	Academic Committee
EdCom	Education Committee
F&BA	Finance & Business Affairs
ILTS	Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy
JSSC	Joint Staff Student Committee
KIS	Key Information Set
NSS	National Student Survey
QMEC	Quality Management and Enhancement Committee
RDC	Research Degrees Committee

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[1] The meeting was chaired by the Dean of Students (Academic) in the absence of the Vice-Provost (Education)/AC Chair, who was away on UCL business.

Preliminary Business

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9   MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 17 OCTOBER 2013

   Confirmed:

9.1   The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 17 October 2013 *[AC Mins. 1-8, 17.10.13]*.

10   MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

10A   National Student Survey *[AC Min.4, 17.10.13]*

   Noted:

10A.1 At its next meeting AC would receive an update report from the Vice-Provost (Education)/AC Chair on latest developments in relation to following up the outcomes of the 2013 NSS, including the submission of action plans by departments.

10A.2 The Provost observed that at its recent meeting Council had expressed the view that a greater sense of urgency was needed in addressing some of the issues which were being raised by UCL's students in the NSS.

Business for Discussion

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11   JOINT STAFF STUDENT COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2012-13

   Received:

11.1   The annual report from JSSC for session 2012-13 at <u>AC 2-7 (13-14)</u>, introduced by the Chair of JSSC, Dr Ruth Siddall.

   Reported:

11.2   The three key issues flagged in the annual report from JSSC [2] were as follows:

   • The operation of the StARS system – the annual report from the StARS Steering Group to JSSC had noted, *inter alia*, a problem of lack of recognition of the StARS system by staff in some departments. Also, in some departments StARS were being appointed by staff rather than elected by the students and some student representatives were unable to qualify for the StARs certificate as insufficient SSCC meetings had taken place.
   • Research student fee payments – concerns had been raised by self-funded research students about the number of fee payment instalments they were currently required to meet and whether the number of instalments could be increased from two to four in order to spread the financial burden faced by those students. Discussions had

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[2]   AC had previously agreed that committees' annual reports to AC should highlight three key issues which the committees have considered during the year in question.

taken place with the Director of F&BA and a further meeting was to be held shortly, although it was not clear whether any progress would be made on this issue.

- Student health centre provision – the report noted concerns which had been raised by students about the future location of the Gower Place Practice, although Dr Siddall observed that the position had moved on since the report had been prepared to a more positive outcome.

Discussion:

11.3   Concern was expressed about the low profile of the StARS system in some departments. This was attributed in part to the fact that the representatives were being selected by staff rather than being elected by the departments' students. It was agreed that Faculty Tutors should liaise with their departments to ensure that the StARs scheme is taken seriously and that representatives are being elected by the students themselves. The Provost noted that it was important that the student representation system is working effectively in all departments within UCL, as there was a correlation between good NSS scores and effective student representation. This was, in his view, not solely a matter for the Faculty Tutors but also a management issue for Heads of Department and Deans, and if necessary, he would work through the line management chain to make sure that the scheme is operating fully in every department.

11.4   Concern was also expressed about the apparent lack of progress in introducing more frequent payment points for self-funded research students, although it was recognised that it would be necessary to understand the practical implications of introducing such a system from F&BA's perspective. AC agreed that it would wish to be kept informed of progress on this issue.

RESOLVED:

11.5   That AC approve the annual report from JSSC for session 2012-13 at <u>AC 2-7 (13-14)</u>.

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

11.6   That a progress report be submitted to AC in due course on the issue of increasing the number of payment points for self-funded research students.

[ACTION: Mr Jason Clarke – to note]

12   RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2012-13

Received:

12.1   The annual report from RDC for session 2012-13 at <u>AC 2-6 (13-14)</u>, introduced by the Chair of RDC, Professor David Bogle.

Reported:

12.2   The three key issues flagged in the annual report from RDC were as follows:

- Issues highlighted in research degree examiners' joint reports – it had been agreed that in future RDC would receive a digest of key issues or themes arising from research degree examiners' reports.

- Guidance on addressing poor performance in respect of research students – new guidance had been received by RDC and this was available from the *Academic Manual.*
- RDC's review of issues highlighted in Faculty Graduate Teaching Committees – one issue which had been identified by RDC was that research students generally would welcome more opportunities to teach but that the availability of such opportunities was uneven across UCL departments.

Discussion:

12.3   There was a wide-ranging discussion relating to teaching opportunities for research students, during the course of which the following points were noted:

- It was argued that in some departments, postgraduate teaching assistants are being overworked and are undertaking duties which should more properly be undertaken by academic staff.
- In some departments, research students were not being provided with opportunities to teach as it was believed that UCL rules meant that any additional teaching responsibilities have to be offered to Teaching Assistants before they can be offered to other individuals, including research students.
- A balance needed to be struck between providing research students with opportunities to teach whilst also ensuring that academic staff are fully engaged in teaching, as undergraduate students come to UCL expecting to be taught predominantly by academic staff.
- It was agreed that Deans should monitor how their departments approach this issue so that there is reasonable degree of consistency within their faculties.

RESOLVED:

12.4   That AC approve the annual report from RDC for session 2012-13 at <u>AC 2-6 (13-14)</u>.

[ACTION: Professor David Bogle, Mr Gary Hawes – to note]

12.5   That Deans of Faculty monitor the provision of teaching opportunities for postgraduate research students across the constituent departments within their faculties.

[ACTION: Deans of Faculty]

13   EDUCATION COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2012-13

Received:

13.1   The annual report from EdCom for session 2012-13 at <u>AC 2-5 (13-14)</u>, introduced by the Chair of EdCom, Professor Mike Ewing.

Reported:

13.2   The three key issues flagged in the annual report from EdCom were as follows:

- Personal Tutoring and Personal Professional Development – EdCom had reviewed the operation of the Personal Tutoring system and had concluded that while the system was generally working well, provision for postgraduate-taught students was uneven across UCL. Further work would be needed to address this variability and a further review would be undertaken in session 2013-14. A report from the

Department of Chemistry on its approach to personal tutoring had been submitted to the Committee in order to disseminate good practice.

- Barring and academic insufficiency – EdCom had developed and approved a revised procedure.
- Calculating scheduled learning percentages for the purposes of the Key Information Set – following research and analysis, EdCom had agreed that 'scheduled learning and teaching activity' should be defined as 1200 hours per year for the purpose of the KIS (which was the scheduled learning element of the total UCL undergraduate learning year of 1500 hours).

Discussion:

13.3 AC agreed that it would be important for EdCom to keep the operation of the Personal Tutor scheme under review to ensure that this is being implemented effectively across all faculties and departments.

RESOLVED:

13.4 That AC approve the annual report from EdCom for session 2012-13 at <u>AC 2-5 (13-14)</u>.

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

14 QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2012-13

Received:

14.1 The annual report from QMEC for session 2012-13 at <u>AC 2-8 (13-14)</u>, introduced by the Chair of QMEC, Professor Mike Ewing.

Reported:

14.2 The three key issues flagged in the annual report from QMEC were as follows:

- Introduction of student reviewers in IQR – following the completion and evaluation of a pilot in 2012-13 whereby student reviewers were involved in three IQRs, QMEC had confirmed that student reviewers should be involved in all IQRs from 2013-14 onwards. AC was invited to note this important development which sought to actively promote students' engagement with one of UCL's most important quality management and enhancement processes.
- Review of the National Quality Assurance Framework and the introduction of the new Higher Education Review – the QAA's new *Quality Code* had been published in its entirety at the end of October 2013 and QMEC had agreed a process for UCL to map its provision against the QAA's requirements.
- KIS – it was likely that the KIS would become more significant as a source of information for potential students and their advisers when making choices about which university and programme of study to select.

Discussion:

14.3 On the issue of student reviewers for IQR, AC noted that it would be important to ensure that prospective student reviewers are briefed fully as to what the role entails and the workload involved. It was noted further that Academic Services and UCLU had liaised closely to make sure that students were provided with appropriate briefing and would continue to do so. The question was also raised as to whether student reviewers should be

remunerated for taking part in IQR. The general feeling among AC members was that this would not be in keeping with the spirit of collegiality which underpins IQR and UCL's approach to quality management and enhancement generally.

RESOLVED:

14.4   That AC approve the annual report from QMEC for session 2012-13 at <u>AC 2-8 (13-14)</u>.

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

Business for Information

15   UCL INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

Received:

15.1   The following papers from the Office of the Vice-Provost (Education) relating to the UCL ILTS:

- Update report on progress against the 2010-15 ILTS Implementation Plan at <u>AC 2-9 (13-14)</u> *[tabled at the meeting]*;
- Revised ILTS 2013-15 at <u>AC 2-10 (13-14)</u>;
- Implementation Plan for ILTS 2013-15 at <u>AC 2-11 (13-14)</u>.

Discussion:

15.2   The Provost observed that one of the issues at the top of his agenda was the need to increase and improve UCL's teaching and learning spaces for students and he advised AC that a number of announcements would shortly be made regarding the acquisition of additional space and a major refurbishment programme for key buildings on the main Bloomsbury campus. AC welcomed the Provost's update and noted that designing curricula, thinking about innovative ways of delivering programmes, and increasing the use of technology in teaching had to be integrated with planning for the estate. The Director of Education Planning noted that these issues would be addressed in a new UCL Education Strategy which was being developed by the Office of the Vice-Provost (Education).

16   REPORTS OF SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS ETC OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Noted:

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

- Education Committee (4 October 2013);
- Programme Review Working Group (27 November 2013);
- Scholarships and Student Funding Committee (12 November 2013).

17   DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted:

17.1   The next meeting will be on Thursday 20 March 2014 at 9.00am in the Old Refectory.

Secretarial Note*: the March meeting was subsequently cancelled. The next meeting will therefore be on* **Thursday 8 May** *at* **9am** *in the* **Haldane Room***.*