ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Thursday 12 May 2011

MINUTES

PRESENT:
Professor Michael Worton (*Chair*)

Mr Bob Allan	Mr Marco Federighi
Mr David Ashton	Professor David Green
Dr Bob Barber	Dr Nikos Konstantinidis
Professor David Bogle	Professor Alan Penn
Ms Sue Bryant	Professor David Price
Professor Richard Catlow	Dr Hilary Richard
Mr Michael Chessum	Dr Ruth Siddall
Dr Brenda Cross	Dr Olga Thomas
Dr Caroline Essex	Ms Soo Ware
Professor Mike Ewing	Professor Henry Woudhuysen

In attendance: Ms Julia Abbott; Ms Karen Barnard; Mr Jason Clarke (Secretary); Ms Clare Goudy; Mr William Wilson.

Apologies for absence were received from: Provost and President; Dr Paul Ayris; Professor Robert Brown; Dr Helen Chatterjee; Mr Alex Nesbitt; Mr Tim Perry; Professor Alan Thompson.

Key to abbreviations:

AC	Academic Committee
AB	Academic Board
CEO	Committee for Equal Opportunities
EdCom	Education Committee
FTC	Faculty Teaching Committee
HEAR	Higher Education Achievement Record
ILTS	Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
PCT	Primary Care Trust
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
VSU	Voluntary Services Unit

---

32   **MINUTES**

Approved

32.1   The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 24 March 2011 *[AC Mins. 14-31, 2010-11],* were confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

33   **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

33A   **UCL Learning and Teaching Strategy**
        [AC Min 16A, 2010-11]

Noted

33A.1   The ILTS implementation plan had been disseminated. A progress report on the implementation plan would be made to AC in the Autumn Term 2011.

33B   **Draft UCL Access Agreement**
        [AC Min 17, 2010-11]

Noted

33B.1   UCL's draft Access Agreement, which had been considered by AC at its meeting on 24 March 2011, was approved by Council at its meeting later that same day and subsequently submitted to OFFA.

34   **LEAD OFFICER REPORTS**

Noted

34.1   One of the recommendations approved by Council following the 2010 review of the UCL committee system was that in certain cases where a standing committee was to be disestablished, a 'Lead Officer' arrangement would be put in place. Under such an arrangement, the officer(s) with key responsibility for an area previously covered by a standing committee would, *inter alia*, prepare an annual report on developments within that area, which would be submitted to AC, AB and Council.

34.2   Lead officer arrangements had been put in place for the following areas:

        • Research Strategy;
        • Careers and Employability;
        • Student Accommodation;
        • Student Welfare Co-ordination;
        • Recruitment and Admission of Students.

34.3   AC was to receive and consider lead officer reports on the above areas (with the exception of Recruitment and Admission of Students – see Minute 34E below) prior to their submission to AB and Council.

34A **RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Received

34A.1 At <u>APPENDIX AC 3/20 (10-11)</u> – the Lead Officer report on Research Strategy, prepared by the Vice-Provost (Research).

34A.2 An oral report by **Professor David Price**, Vice-Provost (Research).

Reported

34A.3 In his oral report, the Vice-Provost (Research) noted, *inter alia*, the following:

- The paper at <u>APPENDIX AC 3/20 (10-11)</u> provided an interim report on UCL's Research Strategy and a summary of the range of activities and initiatives that had been undertaken over the last twelve months in support of the Strategy. The role of the Vice-Provost's Office was to facilitate those activities and initiatives.

- UCL's success in terms of its research performance was due to the excellence and commitment of its research staff. The Research Strategy had three main aims: (i) to support excellence; (ii) to foster cross-disciplinarity; and (iii) to increase the impact of UCL's research in terms of its relevance and practical application to the wider world.

- A revised Research Strategy was being prepared, with a view to this being integrated with the forthcoming Green Paper.

- UCL's research income had shown a significant growth over recent years, although there had been a worrying decline in charitable research income (which may, with hindsight, have been attributable to the effects of the reorganisations in Biomedicine) and action would have to be taken to address that particular issue. UCL would also need to plan for the tighter funding environment, although the likely concentration of Government research funding on larger research groups and larger institutions would favour UCL.

- Preparations for the REF were underway, although a detailed plan could not be finalised until the details of the exercise had been published.

- Considerable work had been undertaken to improve UCL's data systems. IRIS would be going live at the end of the month and heads of department had been contacted to encourage take up of the system by their staff.

- AC was invited to consider how UCL's research activity and Research Strategy could be more effectively integrated with teaching and learning.

Discussion

34A.4 AC agreed that the process of revising both the Research Strategy and the Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy in light of the forthcoming Green Paper provided an excellent opportunity to consider the relationship between research and teaching and to reconsider what UCL means by 'research-led teaching'.

34A.5   The Director of Student Services suggested that the new online module approval process could include a question about how research would inform the content of the proposed module; AC agreed to this very useful suggestion.

RESOLVED

34A.6   That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Research Strategy at <u>APPENDIX AC 3/20 (10-11)</u>

[ACTION: Professor David Price, Mr Tim Perry (as Secretary to AB and Council) – to note]

34A.7   That the Director of Student Services take steps to ensure that the new online module approval process includes a question relating to how the module has been informed by research.

[ACTION: Mr David Ashton]

34B   **CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY**

*[**Ms Karen Barnard**, Head of the Careers Service, attended for this item]*

Received

34B.1   At <u>APPENDIX AC 3/21 (10-11)</u> – the Lead Officer report on Careers and Employability, prepared by the Head of the Careers Service.

34B.2   An oral report by **Ms Karen Barnard**, Head of the Careers Service.

Reported

34B.3   In her oral report, the Head of the Careers Service summarised the range of work being undertaken by the Careers Service and set out some suggestions for new initiatives to support employability (e.g., improving pre-entry communication, advertising internships, etc) and the acquisition of key skills. Given the difficult economic climate and the often negative reporting in the media about the graduate job market, it was important for UCL to focus on employability and on providing its students with the support and opportunities to find jobs.

Discussion

34B.4   It was noted that the introduction of the new fees regime from session 2012-13 would sharpen the focus on the benefits of university education and graduate employment.

34B.5   In response to a question from a member of AC, the Head of the Careers Service confirmed that training is offered to students on using online recruitment processes, as many employers use these to filter applications prior to interview. However, it might be that this service could be better publicised within UCL.

34B.6   The UCL Union's Education Officer expressed appreciation for the work that was done by UCL and the Careers Service in supporting students to find work, but made a plea that the focus on employability did not obscure the general educational benefits of a university education.

34B.7 It was noted that many employers offer unpaid internships, when these should be paid positions. The Head of the Careers Service confirmed that, as a matter of policy, UCL does not advertise any jobs which do not pay at least the national minimum wage.

34B.8 AC supported the following suggestions from the Head of the Careers Service: (i) that departments should be encouraged to have 'employability and careers' as a standing item on the agenda for departmental meetings and that departmental careers advisers should be invited to attend at least once a year to make a presentation on careers-related matters; (ii) that all departments should have dedicated careers web pages. (The report at APPENDIX AC 3/21 (10-11) set out the type of information that could be provided on such web pages.)

34B.9 The Committee noted that the Careers Service had submitted a bid for additional funding in the region of £160k to maintain and enhance the services that it provides. While the Committee recognised that it had no formal role in the budget-setting process, it expressed the hope that the bid would be successful.

RESOLVED

34B.10 That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Careers and Employability at APPENDIX AC 3/21 (10-11)

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

34B.11 That departments should (i) ensure that 'employability and careers is a standing item on the agenda for departmental meetings; (ii) that departmental careers advisers are invited to attend the departmental meeting at least once a year to make a presentation on careers-related matters; (iii) have dedicated careers web pages on their departmental web sites.

> *[ACTION: Deans of Faculty/Faculty Tutors/Careers Service – to advise departments]*

34C **STUDENT ACCOMMODATION**

[*Mr William Wilson, Director of Student Accommodation, attended for this item]*

Received

34C.1 At APPENDIX AC 3/22 (10-11) – the Lead Officer report on Student Accommodation, prepared by the Director of Student Accommodation.

34C.2 An oral report by **Mr William Wilson**, Director of Student Accommodation.

Reported

34C.3 The lack of a proper student number planning process, combined with the trend in recent years for UCL to overshoot its recruitment targets, was causing major problems for the Student Accommodation Office in terms of estimating the likely demand for student accommodation and planning accordingly.

Discussion

34C.4 The AC Chair noted that it had been the Committee's position for several years that UCL's infrastructure was inadequate for the size of its student population. It was imperative that the Masterplanning process gave careful consideration to the question of what should UCL be providing to its students and what it is realistically capable of providing given its estate and infrastructure.

34C.5 Other members of AC noted that the absence of a proper system for central student number planning over several years, compounded by the failure to adhere to agreed targets, was causing problems in other areas as well. This was having a detrimental effect on the student experience. It was unlikely that students would tolerate such conditions, especially after the introduction of £9k fees in 2012-13. Also, the UCL Union's Education Officer noted that, unlike tuition fees, accommodation fees had to be paid by students in advance so these sums had to be found.

34C.6 There was some discussion relating to the Student Accommodation Office's business planning and financial forecasts, although it was agreed that these matters fell outwith the Committee's remit.

RESOLVED

34C.7 That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Student Accommodation at <u>APPENDIX AC 3/22 (10-11)</u>

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

34D **STUDENT WELFARE COORDINATION**

Received

34D.1 At <u>APPENDIX AC 3/23 (10-11)</u> – the Lead Officer report on Student Welfare Coordination, prepared by the Dean of Students (Welfare).

34D.2 An oral report by **Dr Ruth Siddall**, Dean of Students (Welfare).

Reported

34D.3 In her oral report, the Dean of Students (Welfare) noted, *inter alia*, the following:

- The Student Counselling Service had changed its name to Student Psychological Services to better reflect the type and range of support it provided.

- Work had begun to develop a Religious Equality Policy for Students.

- Data on student interruptions and withdrawls showed that, when analysed by ethnicity, students of black, Caribbean or African origin were most likely to interrupt or withdraw from studies in all areas.

- The Gower Place Practice, which was the second largest GP practice in Camden and which catered mainly for UCL students, continued to provide an excellent service to UCL's

students. The practice had successfully made a bid to its PCT to be able to continue to treat UCL students even when they moved out of its catchment area, thus ensuring continuity of medical care. The practice was due to be re-located under the Estates Masterplan and it was key that the practice remained on the main UCL site.

- The Dean of Students noted that the SWCC had provided a better structure for the collation and consideration of data and issues affecting the welfare of UCL's students. Also, given the dispersed nature of UCL's student services provision, the Committee had provided a forum within which staff from the key areas could come together to discuss matters. The disestablishment of the SWCC had had a negative effect in terms of information sharing as it had become less convenient for representatives of the various departments to meet as a group.

Discussion

34D.4 The Committee agreed that it was imperative that the Gower Place Practice remain on the main UCL site.

34D.5 Regarding the analysis by ethnicity of the data on student withdrawls and interruptions, clarification was sought as to where this data would be considered in greater detail, now that the SWCC did not exist. It was suggested that the Committee for Equal Opportunities could discuss this matter further, or perhaps the Education Committee and Research Degrees Committee in relation to, respectively, taught and research students.

34D.6 The Committee endorsed the comments by the Dean of Students (Welfare) regarding the negative impact of the disestablishment of the former SWCC. The Committee agreed that, given the crucial importance of student welfare issues, there was a need within UCL for a 'student welfare committee', 'student experience committee' or similar.

RESOLVED

34D.7 That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Student Welfare Coordination at <u>APPENDIX AC 3/23 (10-11)</u>

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

34D.8 That the officers of the CEO, EdCOm and RDC consider referring relevant data on student withdrawls and interruptions to those committees for consideration.

> *[ACTION: Professor Stephen Smith, Ms Rachel Port, Professor Mike Ewing, Ms Sandra Hinton, Professor David Bogle, Ms Karen Wishart - to note]*

34D.9 That the AC Chair write on behalf of AC to the appropriate senior UCL officers, proposing that a 'Student Welfare Committee' or 'Student Experience Committee' or similar be established.

> *[ACTION: Professor Michael Worton/Mr Jason Clarke]*

34E   **RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSION OF STUDENTS**

Noted

34E.1   The arrangements in this area had been prepared on the assumption that Lead Officer responsibilities could be assigned to a single officer. That assumption was reasonable at the time but subsequent organisational change at UCL meant that responsibility for the areas in question was split between different parts of the Corporate Support Services (CSS).   Although the arrangements were nevertheless agreed by Council with the Academic Registrar as Lead Officer, no report on the operation of these arrangements was produced prior to the Lead Officer's departure from UCL at the beginning of May 2011. Against this background, the Director of Registry and Academic Services was now in the process of reviewing the Lead Officer arrangements in this area, in consultation with the other CSS colleagues concerned. It was hoped to submit revised proposals to Council for approval at its meeting on 6 July 2011 and a report on the operation of Lead Officer arrangements to meetings of AC, AB and Council in the Autumn Term 2011.

Discussed

34E.2   Several members of AC argued that this was another area of UCL's operations where the disestablishment of the relevant standing committee (the former Committee for the Recruitment and Admission of Students) had had a negative impact on coordination and communication. Those members called for the re-establishment of CRAS or a similar body in order to provide an official forum in which matters relating to UCL's admissions and recruitment policies and operations can be discussed. The Committee's earlier discussion about the very real difficulties in planning student accommodation and other student services caused by the lack of a proper student number planning framework was seen as highlighting the need for such a successor body to the former CRAS.

34E.3   The AC Chair expressed concern that in some areas of UCL's operations, it appeared that the disestablishment of the relevant committee and its replacement with a Lead Officer arrangement had had a detrimental effect on effective policy development, coordination and communication, rather than a positive one. However, the view was also expressed that many of the issues which arose in these areas were essentially management issues that did not require consideration by a formal committee.

35   **PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE HEAR WORKING GROUP**

Received

35.1   At <u>APPENDIX AC 3/24 (10-11)</u> – a progress report from the working group established by AC to take forward the development of the HEAR.

35.2   An oral report by **Professor Mike Ewing**, as Chair of the Working Group.

Reported

35.3   Much of the Working Group's recent work had focused on the detailed means of verifying and recording students' extra-curricular activities. The UCL Union and the VSU had been closely involved in this work. Also, funding had been provided to allow for the purchase of a new online tool (GradIntel) which would provide the functionality to produce an electronic HEAR. The HEAR would be introduced for undergraduate students starting in session 2011-12. It was possible for the HEAR to be extended to postgraduate students, although it was intended to evaluate how the HEAR had operated for undergraduate students before making a decision as to whether to extend it to all students.

Discussion

35.4   It was confirmed that non-UCL extra-curricular activities could be recorded on the HEAR provided that these could be verified. Responsibility for verifying such activities would rest with the relevant UCL unit, whilst responsibility for checking that the HEAR was accurate would rest with the individual student. It was intended that there would be an annual process by which students would be asked to check their HEAR entry on Portico.

35.5   The Committee thanked the members of the Working Group and other colleagues for their work in developing the HEAR.

RESOLVED

35.6   That AC approve the progress report from the HEAR Working Group at APPENDIX AC 3/24 (10-11)

36   **PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE UCL-NAZERBAYEV UNIVERSITY PROJECT BOARD**

Received

36.1   At APPENDIX AC 3/25 (10-11) – the annual progress report to AC from the UCL-Kazakhstan Project Board.

36.2   An oral report by **Professor Michael Worton**, as Chair of the Board.

Reported

36.3   The Board was responsible for overseeing the two strands of the UCL-NU Project, which were (i) the Centre for Preparatory Studies, and (ii) UCL consultancy for the creation of the NU School of Engineering. The progress report from the Board provided a full summary of the activities which it had undertaken since the Board's establishment in January 2011.

36.4   A major responsibility for the Board was undertaking thorough risk assessment and management in relation to the project, and this was a standing item on the Board's agenda.

RESOLVED

36.5   That AC approve the progress report from the UCL-Nazerbayev University Project Board at APPENDIX AC 3/25 (10-11).

37   **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

Reported

37.1   UCL had achieved a response rate of 59% in the 2011 National Student Survey, an increase of 8% on the previous year. Also, virtually all subject areas had achieved the NSS publication threshold of 50% and at least 23 students. It was assumed that this improvement was due to the creation of a network of departmental NSS liaison officers and the Chair thanked all those colleagues who had undertaken that role. The NSS results would be available in August and a full analysis would be prepared.

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

Noted

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

- Education Committee - 14 March 2011;
- Joint Staff Student Committee - 24 February 2011;
- Quality Management and Enhancement Committee - 8 March 2011;
- Research Degrees Committee - 21 March 2011;
- Research Governance Committee - 24 March 2011.

39   **FACULTY TEACHING COMMITTEES**

Received

39.1   At <u>APPENDIX AC 3/26 (10-11)</u> - a list of the meetings of FTCs of which the Minutes had been received by the AC Secretary on behalf of AC since the last meeting of AC.

40   **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Noted

40.1   The next meeting of AC will take place on **Thursday 7 July 2011** at **9.00am** in the **Old Refectory**.

JDC
17.05.11