



**Academic Committee
Special Meeting**

Friday 13 March 2020 at 1:00pm

Minutes

Present Members:

President and Provost (Chair); Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Simon Banks (remote access); Professor David Bogle; Dr Celia Caulcott (remote access); Mr Ashley Doolan; Professor Piet Eeckhout; Dr Julie Evans; Dr Hugh Goodacre; Dr Elizabeth Halton; Dr Arne Hofmann; Professor Christoph Lindner; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Helen Matthews; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Hynek Pikhart (remote access); Professor Sue Rogers (remote access); Professor Sasha Roseneil; Mr Mike Rowson; Professor David Shanks; Dr Ruth Siddall; Ms Ashley Slanina-Davies; Dr Sam Smidt; Professor Anthony Smith; Dr Hazel Smith; Ms Olga Thomas; Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson; Professor Andrew Wills; Dr Stan Zochowski

Attendees:

Ms Annabel Brown, Bartlett Faculty Office
Dr Clare Goudy, Provost's Office
Mr Zak Liddell, MAPS Faculty Office
Mr Derfel Owen, Director of Education Services and Transformation
Ms Olivia Whiteley, Academic Services

Apologies:

Dr Paul Ayris; Professor David Bogle; Dame Nicola Brewer; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Dr Simon Cane; Professor Mark Emberton; Professor Graham Hart; Dr Sandra Leaton-Gray; Professor David Lomas; Ms Aatikah Malik; Professor David Price; Professor Geraint Rees; Professor Alan Thompson; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Professor Li Wei

Officer:

Ms Rachel Port

Part I: Matters for Discussion

36. COVID-19 Mitigation – Teaching and Assessment Arrangements (Paper 3-24)

- 36.1. At the start of the meeting, the Chair thanked members for attending the meeting at short notice. It was been arranged in light of the rapidly changing situation concerning the COVID-19 outbreak and that it was likely to have a very significant impact on the operation of teaching and assessment at UCL for the remainder of the current academic year. The Chair explained that he was understandably receiving a very high volume of email correspondence from concerned students and parents on a daily basis. A Working Group consisting of senior UCL officers and the Students' Union UCL continued to meet daily to mitigate the impact of the virus on UCL.
- 36.2. The Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) (VPESA) introduced the paper setting out proposals for teaching and assessment arrangements for UCL students for the remainder of the current academic year in light of the outbreak. The key recommendations from Education Committee (EdCom) were:
 - a. The proposals had been developed and considered by the Examinations and Assessment Contingency Panel (EACP) set up by EdCom in response to the current situation that met on a weekly basis. The VPESA expressed his thanks to EdCom who had worked at pace to develop the recommendations and to the Students' Union who had been actively involved too.
 - b. It was proposed that all face to face teaching should cease with effect from Monday 16 March 2020, and that there be a transition phase to supporting students online instead. This would predominantly affect revision classes for undergraduates and teaching for postgraduate taught students.
 - c. Work had been taking place to develop pedagogical approaches and tools to support online delivery for programmes with teaching taking place in term 3.
 - d. It was unlikely that some 2-3k students per day could come to UCL to undertake examinations in May/June given the current situation.
 - e. Therefore, it was proposed that all invigilated in-class assessments and examinations be cancelled with effect from Monday 16 March 2020 and alternative assessments put in place.
 - f. Guidance would be provided to staff about the format of alternative assessments but it was recognised this work would place a significant burden on staff to complete in a short space of time.
 - g. It was also proposed that first year undergraduate students should not be expected to take examinations and that the first year progression

regulations be suspended accordingly. The first year progression rate was very high and contribution to the final classification mark was very low.

- h. It was considered that deferring assessments and examinations to the and Late Summer Assessment (LSA) period was inadvisable due to it not being known how long the virus outbreak would last. Priority would be given to supporting students through the May 'exam season' with alternative online assessments.
- i. A statement was expected from the Student Loans Company (SLC) later today in light of concerns across the sector about whether the SLC might seek reimbursement of part of a loan if campuses were closed or tuition moved online.
- j. It would be important for students to understand that arrangements would not be perfect and there were likely to be teething problems with technology as UCL supported them in their learning and assessment for the remainder of this academic session, as these were unprecedented circumstances across the university sector.

36.3. The following points were made in discussion:

- a. The Chair noted that the Russell Group VC's Awayday was held yesterday online via MS Teams and it worked well. It appeared that all institutions were making similar proposals about teaching and assessment arrangements and in some instances they were also suspending or making amendments to progression requirements for second year undergraduates as well as for first year students.
- b. A waiver had already been agreed for finalists in UCL Medical School on the MBBS programme of study. Their final examinations would be held on Monday and Tuesday next week and would go ahead as it was in the national interest that those students sat their exams to allow them to graduate and be placed on the Medical Register.
- c. In terms of moving more learning and assessment activities online through Moodle, it was commented that it would be helpful to define open and closed windows to confirm when it would be available for use as otherwise the system could fall over with a high number of simultaneous logins. ISD were already looking at this issue.
- d. It was noted that EACP would prepare detailed guidance for staff about alternative forms of assessment to replace in-class assessment and invigilated examinations. It was intended that departments be encouraged if possible to either exclude the planned assessment or consider scaling it up into an existing assessment that would assess the programme module as a whole. However, it was noted that some modules had mixed cohorts of first and second year undergraduates and so the appropriate alternative assessment required careful consideration.
- e. It was anticipated that there would be a very high volume of queries about alternative assessments to both Arena and ISD. It was intended that there be a central place for people to ask questions and a web form had been

developed for that purpose that would be available from next week. In terms of assessment, information would be issued to students today about what has and has not been done and some FAQs would be developed.

- f. In terms of first year undergraduates, it was noted that their examinations only accounted for 8% of all papers but covered 27k candidatures. Such students would be required to undertake a single capstone assessment remotely instead to be submitted on 29 and 30 June 2020.
- g. It was suggested that taught postgraduates undertaking a research project in a lab did not constitute face to face teaching and if that work was stopped it would be similar to a PhD student stopping their research.
- h. In response to a query, it was considered at present that it was for international and affiliate students to decide themselves whether or not to leave the UK for their home country. UCL's student halls of residence would remain open but it was noted that students did not need to be physically present on campus in order to undertake an online assessment. UCL would continue to sponsor such students and ask them to continue to engage with their teaching and learning.
- i. In terms of oral presentations, it was noted that these could still take place over Skype but such assessments should be discouraged if it only accounted for a small percentage of their assessment as the IT could malfunction.
- j. Colleagues would be encouraged to use systems that were supported by ISD and work to ensure that online systems such as Moodle could withstand the predicted substantial demand for use would be taken forward by ISD.

36.4. AC agreed:

- a. That all invigilated in-class assessments and examinations be cancelled with effect from Monday 16 March 2020 and appropriate alternative assessments put in place.**
- b. That the suspension or amendments of progression requirements for first year undergraduates be approved in principle.**
- c. That all teaching events scheduled for term 3 be moved to alternative remote delivery methods to support PGTs in Term 3.**

37. COVID-19 Mitigation – Academic Committee Contingency Panel (Paper 3-25)

37.1. AC received a proposal (tabled at the meeting and issued with these Minutes) for the delegation of its powers to a Contingency Panel, introduced by the VPESA. The key points made were:

- a. It was proposed that AC delegate its powers to a Contingency Panel that could feasibly meet and make emergency decisions as required should AC be unable to meet physically or meet quoracy requirements.

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- b. Within its Terms of Reference and in accordance with Regulations for Management, AC had the power to form such a Panel.
- c. Any decisions of the Panel and the minutes of its meetings would be reported to AC.

37.2. In response to a suggestion to increase the number of Faculty Deans and Faculty Tutors on the Panel which currently stood at two for each group, the VPESA wished to ensure all four UCL Schools were represented by those officers in order to keep the membership manageable as it was anticipated that the Panel would only meet on an emergency basis. The Chair suggested however that there might be 2 Heads of Department added to the proposed membership.

37.3. **AC approved the delegation of its powers to a Contingency Panel.**

The meeting finished at 1:40pm.

Ms Rachel Port, Secretary to Academic Committee
April 2020