



## Academic Committee

Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 10:00am

### Minutes

#### **Present members:**

Professor Anthony Smith (Vice-Chair); Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Simon Banks; Professor David Bogle; Dr Celia Caulcott; Mr Ashley Doolan; Professor Piet Eeckhout; Dr Julie Evans; Dr Hugh Goodacre; Dr Arne Hofmann; Dr Sandra Leaton-Gray; Professor Christoph Lindner; Ms Aatikah Malik; Dr Helen Matthews; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Hynek Pikhart; Professor David Price; Professor Sasha Roseneil; Mr Mike Rowson; Professor David Shanks; Dr Ruth Siddall; Ms Ashley Slanina-Davies; Dr Sam Smidt; Ms Olga Thomas; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson; Professor Andrew Wills

#### **Attendees:**

Dr Clare Goudy, Provost's Office

#### **Apologies:**

Professor Michael Arthur  
Dr Paul Ayris  
Dame Nicola Brewer  
Professor Stella Bruzzi  
Dr Simon Cane  
Professor Mark Emberton  
Professor Becky Francis  
Professor Graham Hart  
Professor Geraint Rees  
Dr Hazel Smith  
Professor Alan Thompson  
Professor Li Wei  
Dr Stan Zochowski

#### **Officer:**

Ms Rachel Port

## **Part I: Preliminary Business**

### **1. Academic Committee Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership (Paper 1-01)**

- 1.1. Academic Committee (AC) approved its Terms of Reference, Constitution and membership for 2019-20.
- 1.2. The Vice-Chair welcomed Professor Christoph Lindner, Faculty Dean of the Bartlett, as well as the new sabbatical officers, Ms Aatikah Malik, Mr Jim Onyemenam and Ms Ashley Slanina-Davies to their first meeting of AC.

### **2. Academic Committee Sub-Committees Terms of Reference (Paper 1-02)**

- 2.1. AC approved the Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for its sub-committees for 2019-20.

### **3. Minutes**

- 3.1. AC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019 [Minutes 35-47, 2019-20].

### **4. Matters Arising**

- 4.1. There were no matters arising.

## **Part II: Items for Discussion**

### **5. Provost's Business**

- 5.1. The Vice-Chair reported the following items to AC:

#### **Student numbers**

- a. UCL had enrolled 21,651 new students at the start of the current session which surpassed all previous records. Students at all levels were encouraged to complete the 'New to UCL' survey that would be available until 1st December 2019. UCL had received 20,763 undergraduate applications by 15th October 2019. There had been a 9% increase in international students, a 5% increase in home students, and a 1.2% decrease in EU student applications had not occurred in recent years. UCAS had not yet released information about the national picture in relation to student applications.

### **Industrial action**

- b. There would be eight days of strike action, following the University and College Union (UCU) dual ballot on pay and pensions, between 25th November 2019 and 4th December 2019. Emails had been circulated by the Provost and the Director of Human Resources to all staff and communications to students were planned to be sent out in the next day. The Office for Students (OfS) had reminded all institutions that were experiencing strike action of their obligations to students in respect of outcomes and learning opportunities. It was noted that the Faculty of Brain Sciences intended to hold their Open Day on 4th December 2019 when industrial action was planned and the proposed Group to be convened to mitigate the impact of the industrial action would consider whether the event should be rescheduled.

### **Brexit**

- c. UCL's Brexit Mitigation Group (BMG) continued to meet frequently. The UK was due to exit the EU on 31 January 2020 and UCL had contingency plans in place.

### **General Election**

- d. The major political parties had not yet published their manifestos and their respective positions around tuition fees were likely to be to either abolish them or to only take forward parts of the Augar Review. UCL concerns about visa status for staff and research funding remained.

## **6. AC Annual Report to Academic Board and Council (Paper 1-03)**

- 6.1. AC endorsed its Annual Report 2018-19 and recommended that it be submitted to Academic Board and Council for formal approval.

## **7. Principal Theme 2 and Enabler A Annual Report (Paper 1-04)**

- 7.1. The Vice-Chair introduced the Annual Report which set out progress against UCL's Education Strategy 2016-2021 and how UCL was delivering Principal Theme 2 of UCL 2034, integration of research and education. A report on student satisfaction surveys was also included. The key points made were:
  - a. In 2018-19, for the first time, UCL had improved its performance across every area of the National Student Survey (NSS), including overall satisfaction that increased by 2% to 82%, against a background of no overall improvement amongst the Russell Group. It was considered that progress on the scores for the student voice questions was especially significant.
  - b. The report had been considered by Council who were especially interested in student satisfaction rates. 4 out of every 5 students were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience at UCL which was

commendable. However, UCL was ambitious and keen to consider ways to make the student experience even better.

7.2. The following points were made in discussion:

- a. In relation to objective 1 to personalise student support, a new online tool *UCL Tutoring* had been developed that would help students and staff to manage their personal tutoring arrangements. It was intended that digital solutions be used so that students and staff could focus on their interactions rather than being used in place of face-to-face meetings.
- b. It was commented that while the additional space available in the new Student Centre was useful for delivering tutorials there was a lack of physical space and that using space in the UCL Science Library might be an option.
- c. In relation to objective 3 to improve assessment and feedback, UCL's overall NSS scores revealed of a small improvement of 1.7% which left UCL placed 19<sup>th</sup> in the Russell Group. UCL was undertaking a large programme of work in this area in order to reduce and refine its assessment practices and improve feedback.
- d. The TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment) pilot had been developed for launch with departments in 2019-20 session and the output from this pilot would help UCL to implement a review process that was student-focussed and looked in-depth at all stages of the student lifecycle.
- e. The UCL Arena Centre could provide advice and guidance to departments in the area of assessment, while students should be consulted about any changes.
- f. In relation to objective 7, UCL had launched its new MBA programme online that was hosted on 2U's specially designed Learning Management System. This signalled an enhanced investigation of the potential of online learning and whether UCL could deliver that online programmes individually or in partnership.
- g. In relation to objective 8, the Vice-Provost (Enterprise)'s office was keen to be involved in the development of industrial placements that could be part of degrees apprenticeship schemes.

7.3. The Registrar and Head of Student & Registry Services introduced the progress update on UCL 2034 Enabler A which focused on the student experience, and included an in-depth focus on the new UCL Student Centre. The key points made were:

- a. UCL had Enabler A for five years and a light touch revise of the objectives for Enabler A had been undertaken with proposed changes to the Enabler Statement and Objectives.
- b. The key event had been the opening of the new UCL Student Centre in February 2019 with extended opening times for the Student Enquiries

Centre, the launch of AskUCL (the student enquiry service) and the ability to offer more drop in sessions.

7.4. The following points were made in discussion:

- a. AC was interested in how UCL would address the challenges and risks noted in the report. It was noted that a project about Belonging would be undertaken to ensure students were treated as individuals and felt known by UCL. Also, a number of critical infrastructure IT projects were underway that included the Student Success Platform project that would implement a new student enquiry, casework management and personal tutoring system and be rolled out in 2019-20. An Attendance Monitoring project was also underway to deliver an institution-wide system to capture attendance at teaching and learning events.
- b. AC unanimously agreed that the new UCL Student Centre was fantastic and that it was being well used by students.

## **8. Updated Student Protection Policy 2019-20 (Paper 1-05)**

8.1. The Registrar and Head of Student & Registry Services introduced the draft updated UCL Student Protection Policy 2019-20. The key points made were:

- a. UCL was required to submit a Student Protection Plan as part of its application for registration with the OfS in July 2018.
- b. It was expected that the plan was regularly reviewed by the provider with input from its Students' Union.
- c. UCL's student terms and conditions had been under review last session and it was decided that UCL's Student Protection Policy that was closely linked with them should also be reviewed.
- d. The review was undertaken by UCL Legal Services who also revised the student terms and conditions. The purpose of the review was to ensure that there was close alignment between the provisions of the policy and the student terms and conditions so that students received a coherent message on what would happen in the event that UCL was unable to deliver degree programme(s) as planned.
- e. The review also included aligning the plan with the Programme and Module Approval and Amendment Framework in relation to amendments made to degree programmes.
- f. Subject to AC approval the updated version would be submitted to the OfS and placed on a dedicated webpage on the SRS website for ease of reference.

8.2. AC approved the updated UCL Student Protection Policy 2019-20.

**9. Annual Accountability Return 2018-19: Quality Assurance (Paper 1-06)**

- 9.1. The Director of Academic Services introduced the report and associated action plan that set out UCL compliance with the relevant ongoing conditions of registration, and the terms and conditions of funding, with the OfS. The key points made were:
- a. In 2018-19 an audit relating to The Quality Assurance Framework was undertaken by UCL's internal auditors KPMG who recommended that some enhancements be made to the report.
  - b. UCL was tightening up its processes and controls around academic partnerships as recommended by KPMG.
  - c. The Annual Student Experience review (ASER) process would be refreshed for 2019-20 session in order to promote a greater focus on continuous improvement.
  - d. All UK HEIs had been asked to prepare a Degree Outcomes Statement by the end of the 2019-20 session. A draft of the statement would be considered at a future AC meeting.
  - e. KPMG had also recommended that data on the number of complaints raised and submitted to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) be included in the report. The data was collected on a calendar year basis and would be separated out for inclusion in the report for next session.
- 9.2. AC endorsed the return and recommended it be submitted to Council for formal approval.

**10. UCL Statement on Transparency in Research (Paper 1-07)**

- 10.1. The Vice-Provost (Research) introduced the proposed UCL Statement on Transparency in Research. The key points made were:
- a. The Statement expanded elements of UCL's Research Strategy as it set out UCL's expectations of researchers with regards to ensuring transparency – and where appropriate, reproducibility – in their research.
  - b. Reproducibility formed part of UCL's wider commitment to transparency and rigour in all its research. UCL produced some 16k papers each year and Research Councils would query where the paper conclusions could not be replicated.
  - c. The proposed Statement had gone through extensive consultation both internally and externally including at a town hall meeting on research reproducibility and an online survey seeking views from UCL staff and students.
  - d. The UK Reproducibility Network was keen to adopt UCL's Statement as a national standard and a copyright statement was included at the end of the document.

- 10.2. AC approved the proposed UCL Statement on Transparency in Research and it would be subsequently published on the UCL website.

**11. The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (Paper 1-13)**

- 11.1. The Pro-Vice-Provost of the Doctoral School introduced the updated Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The key points made were:
- a. The first Concordat was published in 2008 and the updated version arose from its independent review in 2018 that was chaired by the Pro-Vice-Provost of the Doctoral School.
  - b. There had been a very large growth in the number of researchers both nationally and internationally since 2008 and it was considered this body of staff needed better career development support.
  - c. The Concordat had three defining Principles covering Environment and Culture; Employment; and Professional and Career Development.
  - d. For each of the Principles, the Concordat outlined the key responsibilities of the four main stakeholder groups: researchers, managers of researchers, institutions and funders.
  - e. It was considered that UCL was doing well against the Principles, but improvement was required in the two areas of: long-term career prospects for researchers and training and development.
  - f. In relation to institutional responsibilities, progress against those would be reported in the Vice-Provost (Research)'s annual report to Council.
- 11.2. AC approved the adoption of the updated Concordat at UCL.

**12. Lecturecast**

- 12.1. Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson gave an oral update on the work of the Lecturecast Policy Working Group. The key points made were:
- a. Lecturecast was one of UCL's key digital platforms and the Provost was known to be keen for it to be installed as a baseline in all departments.
  - b. Only 58% of centrally bookable teaching rooms currently had Lecturecast installed.
  - c. The Lecturecast Everywhere Project proposal, approved by Academic Board, sought to bring the number of Lecturecast-enabled centrally-managed and departmentally-managed teaching spaces to 311.
  - d. Some initial 167 rooms had been provisioned and 60 boxes had been set aside by the supplier Echo.
  - e. A Town Hall meeting and email consultation would be undertaken to understand staff and student views on the institutional use of Lecturecast,

to inform the draft policy that would be prepared by the Working Group this session.

- f. The Working Group was considering whether to implement an opt-out policy or to retain the current opt-in policy in the use of Lecturecast. It was intended however that no questions would be asked for those wishing to opt-out as some staff were known anecdotally to have concerns about being recorded.

12.2. The following points were made in discussion:

- a. Aspects of GDPR and the right to erasure required consideration.
- b. Lecturecast might not be appropriate for use for some types of discussion, for example amongst students, and for those events that were not formal lectures.
- c. Use of Lecturecast had changed and it was not just used for recording presentations.
- d. A member commented that rewatching a recording was not always a good experience for students and that guidance around the educational value of watching recordings as a learning tool would be useful.
- e. CMIS data would still be needed to support opt-out as events might have more than one lecturer.
- f. In response to noting that a high volume of a member's teaching was undertaken at Birkbeck, it was noted that they had some enabled rooms.
- g. UCL Chemistry had 100% compliance for using Lecturecast and had not encountered any issues with the downloading of recordings.

### **Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information**

#### **13. New Qualification Proposal: Master of Arts and Sciences (Paper 1-08)**

- 13.1. AC approved the new qualification proposal for a Master of Arts and Sciences (MASc) to complement the existing undergraduate programme (BASc). It would take effect from 2020-21 session.

#### **14. Annual Student Experience Review for Postgraduate Taught Programmes 2018/19: Outcomes (Paper 1-09)**

- 14.1. AC received the Annual Student Experience Review for Postgraduate Taught programmes 2018/19: Outcomes report.

#### **15. Annual Report for session 2018-19 – Education Committee (Paper 1-10)**

- 15.1. AC received the Education Committee Annual Report 2018-19.



**16. Annual Report for session 2018-19 – Library Committee (Paper 1-11)**

16.1. AC received the Library Committee Annual Report 2018-19.

**17. Annual Report for session 2018-19 – Research Degrees Committee (Paper 1-12)**

17.1. AC received the Research Degrees Committee Annual Report 2018-19.

**18. Reports of sub-committees, working groups etc of AC**

18.1. AC received the following sets of minutes:

- a. The minutes of Education Committee, 11 June 2019;
- b. The minutes of Library Committee, 14 May 2019;
- c. The minutes of Research Degrees Committee, 5 June 2019;
- d. The minutes of Research Governance Committee, 20 March 2019;
- e. The minutes of Student Experience Committee, 28 May 2019.

**19. Date of Next Meeting**

19.1. The next meeting of Academic Committee would take place on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 10:00am in the Jeremy Bentham Room (JBR), Wilkins Building.

The meeting finished at 11.30am.

Ms Rachel Port, Secretary to Academic Committee  
January 2020