



ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Thursday 15 December 2011

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Professor Mike Ewing (*Chair*)

Mr David Ashton
Professor David Bogle
Ms Su Bryant
Professor Vince Emery
Mr Marco Federighi
Dr Arne Hofmann
Mr Tim Perry
Ms Mary Rimington
Professor Stephen Smith
Ms Soo Ware

Dr Bob Barber
Professor Robert Brown
Mr Neil Chowdhury
Dr Caroline Essex
Professor David Green
Professor Alan Penn
Dr Hilary Richards
Dr Ruth Siddall
Ms Olga Thomas
Professor Henry Woudhuysen

In attendance: Mr Jason Clarke (Secretary); Mr Rex Knight; and Ms Harriet Lilley

Apologies for absence were received from: Provost and President; Dr Paul Ayris; Professor Steve Caddick; Dr Helen Chatterjee; Dr Brenda Cross; Professor Graham Hart; and Professor David Price.

Key to abbreviations:

AC	Academic Committee
CALT	Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching
EdCom	Education Committee
FTC	Faculty Teaching Committee
IA	Institutional Audit
JSSC	Joint Staff Student Committee
JYA	Junior Year Abroad
KIS	Key Information Set
GPA	Grade Point Average
NSS	National Student Survey
PIASG	post-Institutional Audit Action Group
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QMEC	Quality Management and Enhancement Committee
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
SoP	School of Pharmacy

11 **MEMBERSHIP OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE IN SESSION 2011-12**

Noted

11.1 The following changes to the membership of AC in session 2011-12:

- Dr Arne Hofmann had joined AC as the Faculty Tutor for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences.
- Professor Patrick Maxwell, Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, had nominated Professor Raymond MacAllister to represent him on AC.
- Professor Anthony Smith, currently Principal and Dean of the School of Pharmacy, had been appointed Vice-Provost (Education) – and hence Chair of AC – with effect from 1 January 2012.

12 **MINUTES**

Approved

12.1 The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 20 October 2011 [*AC Mins. 1-10, 2011-12*], were confirmed by the Committee, subject to the following addition to the attendance list: Professor Robert Brown. The Chair would sign the corrected Minutes after the meeting.

13 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

[See also Minute 14 below]

13A **Academic Committee Working Group on Grade Point Average**

[AC Min.4, 2011-12]

Noted

13A.1 At its meeting on 20 October 2011, AC noted that, pursuant to the Council White Paper 2011-21, the AC Chair would be setting up a working group of AC to explore the issue of UCL adopting a grade point average system. At that time it was anticipated that the working group would submit a preliminary report to this meeting of AC. However, priority had been given to considering the issue of semesterisation [*see Minute 14 below*]. Consequently, the first meeting of the working group would now take place in the New Year 2012 with a preliminary report being submitted to AC at its March 2012 meeting.

Received

13A.2 The terms of reference and membership of the AC Working Group on the GPA were, for information, at [APPENDIX AC 2/09 \(11-12\)](#).

14 **SEMESTERISATION: POSITION PAPER FROM THE (ACTING) VICE-PROVOST (EDUCATION)/CHAIR OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**

[AC Min.4, 2011-12]

Noted

- 14.1 Following publication of the Council White Paper 2011-21, the Vice-Provost (Education) had been consulting on the advantages and disadvantages of UCL moving to a semester system, with a view to submitting a position paper to the Provost in the New Year 2012. As the final phase of this consultation exercise, AC was invited to consider the latest draft of the Vice-Provost's position paper, prior to it being finalised and submitted to the Provost.

Received

- 14.2 At APPENDIX AC 2/10 (11-12) – the draft position paper by the Vice-Provost (Education) on semesterisation.
- 14.3 An oral report by Professor Mike Ewing, Vice-Provost (Education)/AC Chair.

Reported

- 14.4 The AC Chair had held a number of meetings with staff from across UCL, including Deans and Faculty Tutors, to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of semesterisation. Also, research had been undertaken into semester systems operated by other universities, both in the UK and abroad. The primary motivation behind moving to a semesterised system would be to align better UCL with other universities globally, and, therefore, increase the level of international collaboration. However, research revealed that while the term 'semesterisation' is used by many universities, there is no universally adopted model for term structures. Indeed, if UCL were to align with one particular 'semester' system, it would be closing itself to others. The AC Chair noted in particular that UCL's current term structure was well matched to the North American market and this was important to attract Junior Year Abroad students. Within the UK, only the University of Edinburgh had successfully implemented a semesterised system and continued to maintain significant numbers of JYA students, but, as a Scottish university, the earlier publication of results of Highers meant that Edinburgh could admit students earlier than an English university.
- 14.5 Both of the semester models referred to in the Council White Paper 2011-21 would cause difficulties with regard to Overseas students obtaining visas, the timing of exams and re-takes, and would raise pedagogical issues for qualitative subjects. There seemed to be a consensus that any radical change in UCL's term structure should be postponed until after the completion of the Programme Review recommended in the Council White Paper and once there was clarity around the proposed changes to the UK university admissions system and the possible shift to post-qualification admissions. However, the consultation exercise had identified a number of changes which could be made to the delivery of teaching within UCL's existing term structure which would achieve real improvements to the student experience at UCL and these were set out in section 6 of the report at APPENDIX AC 2/10 (11-12). Currently, twenty weeks out of the thirty week academic year are used for face-to-face undergraduate teaching and, with the introduction of £9K fees, UCL needs to consider how time can be best used to enhance the student educational experience, for example, (i) should undergraduate students in all years have an induction week at the start of the academic year or should this be

solely for first year students? (i) could the end of the Summer Term be used more efficiently, perhaps to include a global citizenship/enterprise module? (iii) how could UCL ensure that reading weeks provide students with the opportunity for further learning? These and other issues identified in section 6 of the report could be taken forward ahead of any possible future changes to the structure of the academic year.

Discussion

14.6 During the course of the Committee's discussion, the following points *inter alia*, were noted:

- One member of AC expressed disappointment at the report's conclusions and commented that some of the arguments for not adopting semesterisation which had been included in the report were not substantive and that it should have provided a more balanced picture by including more of the benefits of semesterisation (although it was not suggested what those benefits might be).
- Other members of AC who had been involved in the consultation exercise commented that the discussions had been entered into with an open mind, that both the advantages and disadvantages of moving to a semester system had been considered, that the report was a thoughtful and fair summary of the main issues which had been raised, and that the Vice-Provost should be commended for the open and considered way in which he had managed the consultation process. More importantly, the report did not rule out UCL moving to a semester system at some point in the future, but advised that a number of other issues, such as the Programme Review and confirmation of any changes to the UK university admissions system, needed to be resolved before this could happen. In the meantime, the report included some innovative alternative ideas to semesterisation which could positively enhance the student experience without jeopardising UCL's existing networks of international collaborations.
- Some members of AC noted that UCL's terms end earlier than many of its competitors and that some departments hold activities and events in reading weeks for students to further enhance their skills. It was also noted that global citizenship/enterprise should be embedded into all programmes and should not just be an add-on module. It was also noted that time at the end of the Summer Term could provide students with the opportunity to undertake experiences which are not directly related to their programme but which can be recorded on the HEAR.

14.7 The AC Chair thanked members for their comments on the report, which would be amended in light of the discussion and submitted to the Provost for his consideration.

RESOLVED

14.8 That the Vice-Provost/AC Chair amend the draft position paper on semesterisation at APPENDIX AC 2/10 (11-12) in light of the foregoing discussion and submit the revised paper to the Provost for his consideration.

[ACTION: Professor Mike Ewing]

15 **THE COMMON TIMETABLE**

Received

15.1 At APPENDIX AC 2/19 (11-12) - a report from Professor Vince Emery, Academic Lead for the Common Timetable, on proposed changes to the Common Timetable which had been endorsed by EdCom at its meeting on 8 December 2011.

15.2 An oral report by Professor Emery.

Reported

15.3 Following a meeting with some UCL departments to discuss the operation of the Common Timetable and a meeting of key officers, faculties had been asked to consult their departments on a number of questions relating to potential improvements to the system. The consultation exercise revealed strong support for the proposals which would be implemented for the 2012-13 session. The effect of the changes would be evaluated in the Spring Term of session 2012-13. AC was invited to consider and approve the proposed changes.

Discussion

15.4 AC welcomed the changes set out in the report at APPENDIX AC 2/19 (11-12) and noted that it was important to get timetabling right, especially with the introduction of the BASc programme. It was also noted that undergraduate student numbers were likely to rise and that it might be necessary to control the number of module options available so that class sizes could be accommodated in the Common Timetable. It was also suggested that timetabling would be made easier if students chose their module options earlier and that undergraduate students in the second and third year made their choices at the end of the previous year.

15.5 AC members discussed increasing the flexibility of the use of Wednesday afternoons (which were currently set aside for students to take part in extra-curricular activities, especially sport) by offering students electives or other educational activities. AC members also noted that students should be encouraged to take part in sports and other activities such as volunteering and Wednesday afternoon provided a set time for this.

15.6 The Chair of AC requested that Deans of Faculties discuss extending the use of Wednesday afternoons at FTC and DTC meetings.

RESOLVED

15.7 That AC approve, on the recommendation of EdCom, the report at APPENDIX AC 2/19 (11-12).

[ACTION: Professor Vince Emery, Ms Sandra Hinton – to note]

15.8 That Deans of Faculty and Faculty Tutors consult with their faculties and departments on the possibility of extending the use of Wednesday afternoons and report back to AC.

[ACTION: Deans of Faculty, Faculty Tutors]

16 **QAA INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT 2009 – ANNUAL REPORT FROM QMEC ON IMPLEMENTATION OF UCL’S POST-INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT ACTION PLAN**

Noted

- 16.1 Following the Institutional Audit of UCL by the QAA in 2009, AC approved a post-Institutional Audit Action Plan and agreed that QMEC should (i) monitor the implementation of the Action Plan and (ii) submit an annual report to AC on any outstanding areas for action or causes for concern. QMEC considered progress in this area at its meeting on 8 November 2011.

Received

- 16.2 At APPENDIX AC 2/11 (11-12) – the annual report from QMEC for 2011.
- 16.3 An oral report by Jason Clarke, Director of Academic Support/ Secretary to AC.

Reported

- 16.4 Of the 81 actions from the PIASG action plan, only two action points were outstanding, both of which related to the information that UCL publishes on its webpages. In summary, there was no single place on the UCL website where staff could access UCL policies or where key decisions, procedures or new policies could be advertised. AC had previously agreed that the development of a ‘policy zone’ section of the website would address this problem. The creation of a policy zone had been discussed with Ms Susan Farrell, the recently appointed Head of Web and Mobile Services, and it was hoped that this could be addressed ahead of the development of a new institutional web strategy.

Discussion

- 16.5 AC reiterated its support for the creation of a ‘policy zone’ section of the website. It was suggested that Moodle could possibly be used to hold policy information as the system was available to all UCL staff and students, although it was also noted that Moodle was used to provide teaching-related information and might not be the most appropriate method of storing and communicating policies and procedures relating to a broader range of topics.
- 16.6 The Director of CALT noted that it would be important to decide who the key audience for a policy zone would be and that guidance on some policies was already available *via* the Teaching and Learning Portal. It was agreed that CALT should be involved in the discussions relating to the policy zone project, as well as relevant officers from ISD and CAMS.
- 16.7 It was agreed that the Secretary should continue to discuss this initiative with Ms Farrell and other colleagues and keep the Committee updated as to progress.

RESOLVED

- 16.8 That the Secretary to AC discuss further with the Head of Web and Mobile Services and other relevant officers the development of a ‘policy zone’ section of the UCL website; that AC be kept informed of progress.

[ACTION: Mr Jason Clarke]

17 **ANNUAL REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF FACULTY TEACHING COMMITTEES IN SESSION 2010-11**

Noted

- 17.1 AC receives an annual report on the proceedings of FTCs in the previous academic session. The report is submitted to AC *via* QMEC in order to allow the latter to identify any particular quality management and enhancement issues that it might wish to raise directly with a particular faculty and/or faculties and/or flag to AC.

Received

- 17.2 At APPENDIX AC 2/12 (11-12) – the annual report on FTC proceedings in session 2010-11, which was considered by QMEC at its meeting on 8 November 2011.
- 17.3 An oral report from Professor Mike Ewing, as Chair of QMEC.

Reported

- 17.4 The QMEC Chair noted the following points in particular from the annual report at APPENDIX AC 2/12 (11-12):
- identifying student representatives to attend FTC meetings had been a problem in some faculties, but it was expected that the student academic representatives (StARs) could provide representation at such meetings;
 - although FTCs were aware of the NSS, they needed to be better informed about the Student Barometer which provided helpful data for use at faculty-and departmental-level.

Discussion

- 17.5 On the issue of student feedback, the Faculty Tutor from the Faculty of the Built Environment commented that the FBE had drilled down into the information provided by students in its internal surveys to identify the main issues around the student experience, such as student expectations of careers advice *etc*, and had found this to be very helpful in informing the development of faculty-level strategies. The AC Chair requested that the Faculty report back to AC on its findings and the methodologies it had used to obtain this information as this could be useful to other UCL faculties.
- 17.6 It was agreed that Deans and Faculty Tutors should submit the report to their own FTCs for information.

RESOLVED

- 17.7 That the Faculty Tutor of the Faculty of the Built Environment forward to AC in due course information arising from the Faculty's internal student surveys, including details of the methodology by which this is obtained and how it is used to inform strategy.

[ACTION: Ms Soo Ware]

- 17.8 That Deans and Faculty Tutors forward the report at APPENDIX AC 2/12 (11-12) to their FTCs for information.

[ACTION: Deans of Faculty, Faculty Tutors]

18 **EDUCATION COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2010-11**

Received

18.1 At APPENDIX AC 2/13 (11-12) – the annual report from EdCom for session 2010-11.

18.2 An oral report by Professor Vince Emery, Acting Chair of EdCom.

Reported

18.3 The Acting Chair of EdCom drew attention to the following main issues discussed by EdCom during 2010-11:

- engagement monitoring;
- progress on the Common Timetable;
- the review of UCL's External Examiner arrangements, following the outcome of the national review of the system;
- the Harmonised Scheme of Award – work in this area would continue during session 2011-12. It was anticipated that the number of variations to the Scheme would be reduced.

RESOLVED

18.4 That AC approve the annual report from EdCom for session 2010-11 at APPENDIX AC 2/13 (11-12).

[ACTION: Professor Vince Emery, Ms Sandra Hinton – to note]

19 **RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2010-11**

Received

19.1 At APPENDIX AC 2/14 (11-12) – the annual report from RDC for session 2010-11.

19.2 An oral report by Professor David Bogle, Chair of RDC.

Reported

19.3 The RDC Chair drew attention to the following issues noted in the annual report at APPENDIX AC 2/14 (11-12):

- academic staff records held by Human Resources now noted whether the member of staff was a research student supervisor, meaning that all supervisors could be selected in Portico. Data for some research student supervisors in the Faculty of Biomedical Sciences was in the process of being updated on HR records;
- the Graduate School Research Student Survey, which was completed in July 2010, showed that 92% of research students who completed the survey were satisfied or very satisfied with their supervisor. However, this meant that 8% of students who completed the survey had been dissatisfied with their supervision;
- RDC would be looking in detail early in 2012 at the PhD process in line with the Woolf Report. It was anticipated that any recommendations would be available by the summer.

Discussion

- 19.4 Members of AC enquired further about the induction for taught degree graduate students at section 11 of the annual report at APPENDIX AC 2/14 (11-12). The RDC Chair noted that the Graduate School was happy for this to take place at faculty level for the time being, and encouraged engagement with new students.

RESOLVED

- 19.5 That AC approve the annual report from the RDC for session 2010-11 at APPENDIX AC 2/14 (11-12).

[ACTION: Professor David Bogle, Ms Karen Wishart – to note]

20 **JOINT STAFF STUDENT COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2010-11**

Received

- 20.1 At APPENDIX AC 2/15 (11-12) – the annual report from JSSC for session 2010-11.
- 20.2 An oral report by Dr Ruth Siddall, Chair of JSSC.

Reported

- 20.3 The JSSC Chair drew attention to the following items in particular in the JSSC Annual Report at APPENDIX AC 2/15 (11-12):
- JSSC was pleased to note that contemplation and quiet facilities had been included in the UCL Estates Masterplan;
 - the quality of library and IT services and facilities had again been raised by students at JSSC in 2010-11;
 - JSSC was pleased to note that the issues regarding a blood donation facility had now been resolved.

RESOLVED

- 20.4 That AC approve the annual report from JSSC for session 2010-11 at APPENDIX AC 2/15 (11-12).

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

21 **QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2010-11**

Received

- 21.1 At APPENDIX AC 2/16 (11-12) – the annual report from QMEC for session 2010-11.
- 21.2 An oral report by Professor Mike Ewing, as Chair of QMEC.

Reported

- 21.3 The QMEC Chair drew attention to the introduction of the Key Information Set requirements in September 2012, noting that:

- the KIS will specify standard information requirements, with which all UK universities must comply. Information gathered for the KIS will be published on both a new central national website and on university websites, and will be based on auditable data. Prospective students will be able to view information at programme level *via* the KIS webpages.
- It has been proposed that the KIS and the NSS may be extended to cover taught postgraduate students in the future and UCL would need to think about the implications of this.

RESOLVED

- 21.4 That AC approve the annual report from QMEC for session 2010-11 at APPENDIX AC 2/16 (11-12).

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

22 APPROVAL OF A NEW DEGREE AWARD

Noted

- 22.1 At its meeting on 7 July 2008, AC approved a procedure for the approval of new degree awards at UCL.
- 22.2 Following the decision of the School of Pharmacy and UCL to merge with effect from 1 January 2012, the SoP's Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree award needed to be added to UCL's list of approved degree titles.
- 22.3 At its meeting on 8 December 2011, EdCom approved a proposal that UCL add the MPharm to its list of approved degree titles. In accordance with the procedure for the approval of new degree awards, EdCom *Resolved* that the proposal be submitted to AC for approval.

RESOLVED

- 22.4 That AC approve formally, on the recommendation of EdCom, the addition of the following degree title to its list of approved degree awards:
- **Master of Pharmacy or MPharm.**

[ACTION: Mr David Ashton, Ms Irenie Morley, Ms Sandra Hinton – to note]

23 INTERVIEWS: DEFINITION AND POLICY

Noted

- 23.1 At its meeting on 11 October 2011, the Admissions Structures and Selection Processes Steering Group approved a revised definition and policy for interviews.

Received

- 23.2 At APPENDIX AC 2/17 (11-12) – for information, the definition and policy, which was also received by EdCom at its meeting on 8 December 2011 and which will be added to the *UCL Academic Manual*.

Reported

- 23.3 The AC Chair reported that any queries regarding the definition and policy for interviews should be raised with the Admissions Structures and Selections Processes Steering Group, via Mr Lyndon McKeivitt, Secretary to the Group.

[ACTION: Members of AC – to note]

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

Noted

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

- Education Committee - 14 October 2011;
- Quality Management and Enhancement Committee - 8 November 2011;
- Research Degrees Committee - 13 October 2011.

25 **FACULTY TEACHING COMMITTEES**

Received

- 25.1 At APPENDIX AC 2/18 (11-12) - a list of the meetings of FTCs of which the Minutes had been received by the AC Secretary on behalf of AC since the Committee's meeting on 20 October 2011.

26 **PROFESSOR MIKE EWING**

Noted

- 26.1 The Committee thanked Professor Ewing for chairing AC in his capacity as Acting Vice-Provost (Education) and noted that the next meeting of AC would be chaired by the new Vice-Provost (Education), Professor Anthony Smith.

27 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Noted

- 27.1 The next meeting of AC will take place on **Thursday 22 March 2012** at **9.00am** in the **Haldane Room**.

JASON CLARKE
Director of Academic Support
12 January 2012