



ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Thursday 16 June 2016

MINUTES

PRESENT:

President and Provost (*Chair*)

Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Paul Ayris; Dr Simon Banks; Professor David Bogle; Dame Nicola Brewer; Professor Nick Brook; Dr Caroline Essex; Dr Julie Evans; Professor Mary Fulbrook; Dr Christine Hoffmann; Dr Arne Hofmann; Dr Helen Matthews; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Alan Penn; Professor David Price; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Ruth Siddall; Professor Anthony Smith; Dr Hazel Smith; Ms Olga Thomas; Ms Suguna Wair; Ms Susan Ware.

In attendance: Dr Clare Goudy; Mr Nick McGhee (Acting Secretary); Ms Chandan Shah; Professor Gabriella Vigliocco.

Apologies for absence were received from: Professor Andrew Brown; Dr Celia Caulcott; Dr Brenda Cross; Ms Anna Douglas; Professor Mark Emberton; Dr Dilly Fung; Professor Dame Hazel Genn; Professor Graham Hart; Professor David Lomas; Ms Wahida Samie; Professor Alan Thompson; Professor Jonathan Wolff.

Key to abbreviations:

AB	Academic Board
AC	Academic Committee
ASER	Annual Student Experience Review
BME	black and minority ethnic
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MPS	Max Planck Society
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
PGT	postgraduate taught
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
REF	Research Excellence Framework
STEC	Student Experience Committee
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
UCLU	UCL (Students') Union
UG	undergraduate
WP	Widening Participation
WTAC	Wellcome Trust Africa Centre

Preliminary business

36 MINUTES OF 17 MARCH 2016 MEETING

- 36.1 **Approved** – the Minutes of the Academic Committee meeting held on 17 March 2016 [*AC Minutes 21-35, 2015-16*].

37 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 37.1 There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Matters for discussion

38 PROVOST'S BUSINESS

- 38.1 The Financial Times had recently made a number of claims relating to UCL's financial position, following discussion of the matter at a Special Meeting of Academic Board on 9 June. The Provost had written to Heads of Department to stress that UCL was in a sound and strengthening financial position, and that the 3.5% target surplus for the current year would be achieved. Contrary to some reports, UCL's £280m EIB loan had been secured with the full approval of the Executive and of UCL Council. UCL's projected borrowing was on a smaller scale and on better terms than a number of competitor institutions. Details of the loan would be circulated to Heads of Department later in the day, together with an FAQ. UCL had secured a second loan of £150m from high street banks with a revolving credit facility. Even once these loans had been taken out, UCL's debt to turnover ratio would still be below the sector average.
- 38.2 Academic Board had urged that urgent action be taken on the question of discretionary accounts. The Provost would be writing to Deans and Heads of Department with an update shortly.
- 38.3 The SMT had discussed contingency plans in the event of a Brexit vote on 23 June, but detailed planning was difficult in the absence of any certainty about the nature or timescale of what would follow. Key questions included the attitude of the EU to existing research grants and the technical possibility of UK HEIs being in default of the terms and conditions of those grants; the date on which the UK would cease to be an EU member; the loan support arrangements for existing and future EU students, as well as those under offer; and the future of the Government itself. UCL would need to consider whether its marketing was appropriately configured in the event of a need to secure additional UK or overseas (non-EU) students. The Provost paid tribute to UCL's contribution to the debate, notably on the part of the UCL European Institute, and to the partnership with UCLU in encouraging students to register to vote.

39 ANNUAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE REVIEW (ASER)

[*PAPER 4-01, 2015-16*]

- 39.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the paper from Professor Anthony Smith, Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs).
- 39.2 ASER was an important new process for UCL which had now completed its first iteration. The process had systematically drawn together for the first time a wide

range of data about academic standards and the student experience. The development of the ASER framework was an ongoing process, which would reflect the requirements of the TEF (see Minute 41 below). UCL could take confidence in the level of scrutiny applied to its taught programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

- 39.3 Professor Smith noted that the introduction of a systematic survey of PGT provision was a new development for UCL. PGT provision tended to grow in a more organic way than UG, and response rates to student satisfaction surveys were typically lower. It was possible UCL would wish to augment elements of the PGT ACER for next year.
- 39.4 AC welcomed some encouraging WP and BME data in the report.

40 QAA HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW – UPDATE

- 40.1 **Received** – an oral update from Professor Anthony Smith, Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) and Chair of the Higher Education Review Strategy Group.
- 40.2 Academic Committee had approved the Self-Evaluation Document at a Special Meeting on 2 February. The QAA HE Review visit had taken place in the week of 9 May and the key findings letter had now been received. This indicated a positive outcome in terms of UCL meeting UK expectations in the four areas of: setting and maintaining academic standards and awards; the quality of student learning opportunities; the quality of information about learning opportunities; and the enhancement of learning opportunities. The full report was due on 23 June.
- 40.3 The QAA team had made two recommendations, relating to the consistent implementation of policy around Staff-Student Consultative Committees and promoting awareness of the complaints policy. The review had also identified two items of good practice, relating to the ChangeMakers initiative and the Doctoral School's framework for promoting the quality of the postgraduate research environment. It had also affirmed those issues identified by UCL, namely: the need to define the learning outcomes for interim/exit awards; the development of the model for personal tutoring; the work on improving the teaching estate; and the work on assessment and feedback issues through the ASER.
- 40.4 The Provost recorded his thanks to Professor Smith, as well as to Derfel Owen, Dilly Fung and other colleagues involved in preparing for and arranging the process.

41 HIGHER EDUCATION WHITE PAPER: TEACHING EXCELLENCE, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND STUDENT CHOICE AND TEF CONSULTATION PAPER

- 41.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the White Paper and the TEF Consultation Paper, from Professor Anthony Smith, Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs).
- 41.2 The Government's White Paper, *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*¹ (May 2016) was expected to have a significant impact on both the education and research functions of UK HEIs. The principal structural proposals were the reallocation of HEFCE's research function to a

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-success-as-a-knowledge-economy-white-paper>

new body to sit alongside Research Councils UK and Innovate UK, and the reallocation of HEFCE's teaching-related operations to the new Office for Students, which would also house the current Office for Fair Access.

- 41.3 The White Paper asserted the Government's belief in a marketised approach to the sector, notably by making it easier for new HE providers to obtain a university title and degree-awarding powers. Although this element did not directly relate to existing HEIs, the Government would as a result be requiring all HEIs to provide an exit strategy for their students in the event of their going out of business. Indications had been given that there was no intention to increase the regulatory burden on existing providers unnecessarily, but no commitment could be made in this respect.
- 41.4 The White Paper also introduced the Teaching Excellence Framework, under which universities would have their teaching deemed either to have met expectations, to be excellent, or to be outstanding. 'Excellent' or 'outstanding' judgements would enable the institutions concerned to raise fees by the rate of inflation. The TEF would be phased-in over four years, although there had been conflicting information about when this period commenced. Y3 included a pilot scheme to carry out the TEF at disciplinary level, although it was envisaged that a single maximum fee level would continue to apply across an institution. In Y4 it was proposed the TEF would extend to PGT programmes. The data used for the TEF would be on a three-year rolling average.
- 41.5 AC discussed a number of complications around the proposed arrangements for private providers in the sector, including: the relationship between maximum fee levels, the OFFA agreement on bursaries, and access to the Government's student loanbook; the prospect of private education providers coexisting as public research institutions if ever deemed eligible for the REF; and the financial relationship between private medical schools and NHS Hospitals, particularly in view of the capping of student numbers at existing providers.
- 41.6 OFFA was asking universities for an indication of their desire for inflationary uplift to tuition fees and any concomitant changes to the access agreement. UCL was likely to seek to front-load any adjustments to the bursary agreement to lower-income families.
- 41.7 AC noted that the changes could potentially result in some large industrial organisations applying to award research degrees. This would in turn have an impact on existing university collaborations.
- 41.8 Research England would review the operation of the next REF, which was scheduled for 2021 with a submission date of November 2020. Professor David Price would chair the Reliable Research Metrics Forum.

42 UCL'S GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY: PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING ANCHOR PARTNERSHIPS

- 42.1 **Received** – an oral update from Dame Nicola Brewer, Vice-Provost (International), on the development of three key emerging international partnerships: the Wellcome Trust Africa Centre (WTAC, now known as the Unified Institute, UI), Peking University (PKU), and Yale University.
- 42.2 Since the last meeting of AC the Wellcome Trust had carried out a successful site visit to WTAC, resulting in a decision to provide £34m of support over five years. UCL

had recently joined the UI Board. This was currently being managed as a Type 2 (Faculty) Partnership, with elements of Type 3 (Institutional) Partnership because of the potential global impact and size of the grant. It was expected that the recommendation to Council in July would be that the necessary conditions for Anchor Partnership (Type 4) status were not yet in place, but that further development of this significant partnership was in train. Progress would be reviewed in 12 months' time.

- 42.3 The new President of PKU had visited UCL in April. He and the Provost had agreed that UCL and PKU were strategic partners. A recommendation was likely to be submitted to UCL Council in November 2016 that UCL should treat this as its first Anchor Partnership.
- 42.4 The Yale UCL Collaborative was progressing well, and broadening in academic scope from its initial home in medicine and the life sciences. That, combined with the creative energy between the respective academic communities, the chemistry between the two Presidents and the track record over nearly 10 years of collaborative activity and increasing profile given to it, meant that the Collaborative was operating successfully as a Type 3 (Institutional) Partnership. This would be reviewed by the North American Steering Group towards the end of 2016.
- 42.5 UCL continued to receive many expressions of interest in developing closer working relationships from a number of international partners, notably the Universities of Toronto, Hong Kong and Queensland.
- 42.6 UCL was in discussion with the Max Planck Society (MPS), with whom staff had co-authored 1,700 publications in the last five years, placing it fifth among UCL's international collaborators. Other potential shared initiatives and interests with the MPS included doctoral training and open access publishing. AC welcomed the potential to develop and revive deeper collaboration with the MPS.
- 42.7 AC noted that recommendations on UCL's engagement with India, developed during a recent cross-institutional scoping visit, would be made soon to SMT.
- 42.8 The academic networks of Faculty Vice-Deans (International) and the seven Pro-Vice-Provosts were working well. The Global Engagement Office had introduced a pilot funding programme for individual academics to encourage international collaboration, which had already exceeded its target of supporting 50 UCL academics.
- 42.9 AC congratulated Dame Nicola on progress to date and noted the need for appropriate levels of investment if such initiatives were to realise their potential.

Other matters for approval or information
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43 ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHAIR ON BEHALF OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

- 43.1 There was no action to report.

44 NEW QUALIFICATION FOR APPROVAL - MPLAN
[PAPER 4-02, 2015-16]

- 44.1 **Approved** – a new qualification, MPlan.

45 ACADEMIC REGULATIONS REVIEW

[PAPER 4-03, 2015-16]

45.1 **Received** – the academic regulations review.

46 ANNUAL REPORT FROM EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON NEW PROGRAMMES OF STUDY APPROVED IN 2015-16

[PAPER 4-04, 2015-16]

46.1 **Received** – the annual report of new programmes of study approved in 2015-16.

47 STEC STUDENT FEEDBACK DATA OVERVIEW REPORT 2014-15

[PAPER 4-05, 2015-16]

47.1 **Received** – the STEC student feedback data overview report for 2014-15.

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

48.1 **Received** – a note of the following Minutes, received by AC officers:

- Education Committee – 1 December 2015
- Equalities and Diversity Committee – 24 November 2015
- Library Committee – 2 March 2016

49 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

49.1 The dates of next meetings of Academic Committee had been scheduled as follows:

2016-17 session

- Tuesday 8 November 2016 at 10.00am
- Tuesday 14 March 2017 at 10.00am
- Thursday 15 June 2017 at 10.00am

2017-18 session

- Tuesday 7 November 2017 at 10.00am

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