⌂UCL

Academic Committee

Thursday 17th November 2022 at 10:00am

Video-conferencing meeting via MS Teams

Minutes

Present Members:
President and Provost (Chair); Professor Ibrahim Abubakar; Hamza Ahmed; Professor Kathy Armour; Dr Paul Ayris; Professor Simon Banks; Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Dr Hugh Goodacre; Dr Christine Hoffmann; Zak Liddell; Professor Christoph Lindner; Professor Allison Littlejohn; Blathnaid Mahony; Umair Mehmood; Seyi Osi; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mike Rowson; Professor Eloise Scotford; Professor David Shanks; Dr Ruth Siddall; Professor Anthony Smith; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Kirsty Walker; Professor Nicola Walshe; Professor Li Wei

Apologies:
Professor David Bogle; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Sarah Cowls; Professor Duncan Craig; Professor Mark Emberton; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Angharad Milenkovic; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Geraint Rees; Dr Suzanne Ruddy; Dr Michael Short; Professor Olga Thomas; Dr Zachary Walker; Dr Kathryn Walsh

In attendance:
For Minutes 1-16: Dr Clare Goudy, Chief of Staff, President and Provost's Office
For Minutes 1-16: Professor Parama Chaudhury, Pro-Vice-Provost (Education – Student Academic Experience)
For Minute 5: Paul Clark, Vice-President (Strategy)
For Minute 5: Laura Mackenzie, Project Manager (Academic Development)
For Minute 6: John Dubber, Chief Executive, Students' Union UCL
For Minute 6: Carl Salton-Brooks, Head of Societies and Projects
For Minute 8: Claire Hartill, Acting Head of Regulations and Casework Team
For Minute 8: Zoe Harrison, Casework Manger

Officer:
Rachel Port, Governance Manager: Research Integrity

Part I: Preliminary Business

1.   Academic Committee Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2022-23 (1-01)

1.1.   Academic Committee (AC) approved its Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for 2022-23.

2.   Academic Committee Sub-Committees Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2022-23 (1-02)

2.1.   AC approved the Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for its sub-committees for 2022-23.

3.   Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2022

3.1.   AC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2022 [Minutes 17-30, 2021-22].

4.   Matters arising from the Minutes

4.1.   Arising from minute 21.3, the AC Secretary would liaise with the Secretary to Academic Board (AB) and the Vice-Provost (RIGE) about the timing of a presentation on UCL's REF2021 results and preparations for the next exercise to AB.

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

5.   UCL Strategic Plan 2022-27: Draft Strategic Plan Consultation Report (1-03)

5.1.   Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

5.2.   Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

5.3.   Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

6.   UCL Student Life Strategy (1-04)

6.1.   John Dubber, Chief Executive, Students' Union UCL, introduced the UCL Student Life Strategy. The key points made were:
   a. The Student Life Strategy had been prepared to set out a vision for the extra and co-curricular experience of students at UCL over the next five

years. It was also a key component of the future focused approach to education envisaged in UCL's Strategic Plan 2022-27.

b. It was underpinned by a commitment to work in partnership to: build on the Students' Union's model of student engagement and leadership; recognise the diversity of UCL's student body and work towards equity; provide opportunities for all levels of commitment and skill; support the creation of a student life hub at departmental level; develop a coherent approach to supporting experiential learning; and create more opportunities for alumni to engage meaningfully with student life at UCL.

c. The strategy included a focus on six key areas as follows: sport and physical activity; performing and creative arts; community volunteering; intercultural engagement; departmental societies; and the vibrant student life in London.

d. In relation to the key areas it was intended that: by 2028, 50% of all students would engage with sports and physical activity at UCL; over 12,500 students would be involved in arts UCL by 2028; that over 5k students would take part in community volunteering by 2028; that 15 major campus cultural event celebrations would be embedded in the annual cycle by 2024; that there would be 10k active members of departmental societies by 2028; and that by 2028 half of all students would attend at least one major on campus celebration event.

e. Each area had an associated set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress.

6.2. During discussion, the following points were made:

a. The Students' Union sabbatical officers considered that the Student Life Strategy was excellent for UCL's student body, and the plan to tackle any wellbeing issues and the increased visibility of departmental societies were especially welcomed.

b. AC also considered that the strategy was highly positive and would be productive. However, it was noted that it required investment and should not be side-lined.

c. The strategy aimed to create a sense of community and belonging, and it was important that it was considered along with other UCL strategies.

d. It was noted that no UCL branding had been used in the strategy to allow it to focus on improvements for students and to avoid a campaign that might separate "life" and "education".

e. The Students' Union was realistic about its financial position and the strategy aimed to tackle priority areas.

f. It was important that the strategy was not siloed, and that the Students' Union should link up with academic departments as well as other relevant units such as UCL Careers.

g. The creation of a departmental student life hub was considered to be highly important, and departmental societies were considered to be powerful agents for change and belonging. However, it was noted that devolution to departmental level might be unsustainable, especially in

smaller departments, and there was a suggestion to work with faculties to look at different ways to operationalise the vision of belonging.

h. Some work around the strategy involved the rethinking of the meaning of student life as well as consideration of the meaning of being a student at UCL.

i. Equity was considered to be important given some UCL students came from schools where student life was not considered holistically.

j. In relation to students with disabilities, the UCL Library was praised for the work it had undertaken in this area under UCL's Grand Challenges scheme.

6.3. AC endorsed the UCL Student Life Strategy.

7. UCL Student Complaints Annual Report 2021 (1-05)

7.1. Claire Hartill, Acting Head, Regulations and Casework Team, and Zoe Harrison, Casework Manager, introduced the UCL Student Complaints Annual Report 2021. The key points made were:

a. The number of formal complaints submitted had decreased by 33% compared to 2020 where the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had led to an unprecedented number of complaints being submitted.

b. In 2021, UCL experienced a higher number of non-academic student complaints relating to the industrial action and the "tail-end" of Covid-19 pandemic complaints.

c. The report now included statistics on complaint numbers by student headcount.

d. In 2021, a high number of complaints submitted were from those departments that offered professional accreditation on their programmes of study.

e. UCL's compensation payments increased in 2021 and amounted to some £75k which was its highest level to date.

7.2. During discussion, the following points were made:

a. In relation to the complaint numbers by student headcount, the Chair considered that the correlation between departments and their National Student Survey (NSS) scores against the number of complaints made required closer examination.

b. It was noted that those areas would be covered in the Education Plans to be produced by departments next session.

7.3. AC received the UCL Student Complaints Annual Report 2021.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

8.   Review of UCL Education Governance Structures (1-06)

8.1.   AC noted the review of UCL's Education Governance Structures that had been approved by Education Committee.

9.   Academic Committee Annual Report to Academic Board and Council 2021-22 (1-07)

9.1.   AC approved the Academic Committee Annual Report 2021-22.

10.   Annual Report for Session 2021-22 – Education Committee (1-08)

10.1. AC approved the Education Committee Annual Report 2021-22.

11.   Annual Report for session 2021-22 – Library Committee (1-09)

11.1. AC approved the Library Committee Annual Report 2021-22.

12.   Annual Report for session 2021-22 – Research Degrees Committee (1-10)

12.1. AC approved the Research Degrees Committee Annual Report 2021-22.

13.   Office for Students (OfS) Business Plan 2022-23 – Student and Registry Services (SRS) Compliance Summary (1-11)

13.1. AC received the OfS Business Plan 2022-23 – SRS Compliance Summary.

14.   Office for Students Risk Register – B conditions (1-12)

14.1. AC received the OfS Risk Register – B conditions.

15.   Reports of sub-committees, working groups etc of AC

15.1. AC received the following sets of minutes:

   a. The minutes of Education Committee, 9th June 2022; 19th July 2022, 20th September 2022;
   b. The minutes of Library Committee, 6th June 2022;
   c. The minutes of Research Degrees Committee, 7th June 2022.

16.   Date of next meeting

16.1. The next meeting of Academic Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday 2 March 2023 at 10:00am on MS Teams. This meeting was subsequently cancelled and therefore the next meeting would take place on Thursday 6 July 2023 at 10:00am.

Rachel Port
Secretary to Academic Committee
February 2023