Academic Committee
Thursday 19 November 2020 at 10:00am

Video-conferencing meeting via MS Teams

Minutes

Present Members:
President and Provost (Chair); Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Paul Ayris; Dr Simon Banks; Mr Ayman Benmati; Professor David Bogle; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Professor Jon Butterworth; Dr Celia Caulcott; Dr Simon Cane; Mr Ashley Doolan; Professor Piet Eeckhout; Professor Mark Emberton; Dr Julie Evans; Professor Dame Hazel Genn; Dr Hugh Goodacre; Professor Graham Hart; Dr Christine Hoffmann; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Christoph Lindner; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Helen Matthews; Dr Meera Nath Sarin; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Hynek Pikhart; Professor David Price; Professor Geraint Rees; Dr Aeli Roberts; Professor Sasha Roseneil; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Ruth Siddall; Dr Justin Siefker; Professor David Shanks; Professor Anthony Smith; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Olga Thomas; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker

Attendees:
Dr Clare Goudy, Chief of Staff, Provost's Office
Mr Derfel Owen, Director of Education Services and Transformation
Professor Norbert Pachler, Pro-Vice-Provost: Digital Education
Ms Susannah Steele, Senior Project Manager, UCL Innovation and Enterprise [for Minute 11]

Apologies:
Ms Yasmeen Daoud; Professor David Lomas; Professor Sue Rogers; Professor Alan Thompson; Dr Eleanor Tillett

Officer:
Ms Rachel Port

Part I: Preliminary Business

2. **Academic Committee Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership (Paper 2-02)**

2.1. The Chair welcomed all the new members to the first scheduled meeting of Academic Committee (AC) this session and thanked them for their willingness to serve. AC was considered to be an important committee in UCL's governance structure and it handled a high amount of business. At its first meeting each session, AC noted its terms of reference, constitution and membership, and those of its sub-committees'. In light of the recommendations arising from Academic Board's (AB) Commission of Inquiry (COI) report, AB had approved a request that its powers relating to educational policy, currently delegated to AC be delegated to Education Committee (EdCom) instead. AB had also made some recommendations with respect to the constitution of EdCom. Therefore, some revisions were proposed to both AC's and EdCom's terms of reference and the EdCom constitution in order to effect these changes.

2.2. Ms Wendy Appleby, Registrar and Head of Student Registry Services introduced the paper setting out the proposed revisions to AC's terms of reference and constitution. The key points made were:

   a. The suggested amendments reflected the new UCL Innovation and Enterprise Committee and AB's decision with respect to its delegation of powers. They also reflected AC's remit in providing advice to Council on its responsibilities derived from the Office for Students (OfS) Regulatory Framework on access and participation, academic quality and standards and protecting the interests of students.
   b. It was suggested that the assurance provided to Council by AC might be tested at a joint meeting of AB and Council should that be a model that Council and AB wished to adopt.
   c. AC reported to Council who owned AC's terms of reference and constitution and would be the approval authority for any changes adopted.

2.3. The following points were made in discussion:

   a. The Chair explained that the proposed revisions sought to cover the wider governance framework as well as trying to reflect the new arrangements from the OfS.
   b. One of the COI recommendations was around having opportunities for Council and AB to come together and the proposed revision sought to address this aspect.
   c. The revisions sought to address the COI recommendations, although it was recommended that AC would remain the parent body for EdCom.

    d. AC considered that the proposed revisions were a sensible route to follow to respond to the COI recommendations.

    e. It was proposed that the Chair of the new Innovation and Enterprise Committee (IEC) be added to the AC constitution in the same way as the Chairs of EdCom and Research Degrees Committee were ex-officio members.

2.4. AC agreed to recommend approval of the proposed revisions to its terms of reference, subject to the addition of the Chair of IEC being added to its ex-officio membership and constitution, and the revisions would be forwarded to Council for formal approval.

3. Education Committee Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership (Paper 2-03)

3.1. Ms Wendy Appleby, Registrar and Head of Student Registry Services introduced the paper setting out the proposed revisions to EdCom's terms of reference. The key points made were:

    a. The Registrar declared an interest as the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) who chaired EdCom was also her line manager.

    b. Changes to the terms of reference, constitution and membership of EdCom were a matter for AC to approve as the parent body of EdCom.

    c. The proposed amendments included a new term of reference which was the delegation from AB that was to be moved from AC to EdCom. The effect of this would be that EdCom would have responsibility for providing advice to Council on all academic matters and questions affecting the educational policy of UCL through powers delegated by AB.

    d. The COI and AB had also made recommendations that a number of the ex-officio members be removed from the EdCom constitution, to be replaced by members elected by AB, and that its chair be elected. It was proposed that the number of academic staff elected by and from AB be increased from 3 to 12. However, at this stage, it did not feel appropriate to have a major revision of EdCom's membership and continuity in the role of the Chair and the overall membership was recommended, especially given the relationship of the work of EdCom to the external regulatory environment.

3.2. The following points were made in discussion:

    a. Some members considered that the proposed revisions were insufficient to meet the recommendations of the COI. They lacked clarity over the concerns with regulatory authority and considered that much of EdCom's work impacted in the day-to-day working of academic life and a sense of EdCom directly reporting to AB was needed.

b. The Chair noted that direct reporting from EdCom to AB did not close the regulatory reporting line. Issues could occur from EdCom that could not clearly be dealt with by AB and as accountable officer, the Chair would be unable to close them off. EdCom operated in a wider framework rather than in a vacuum and covered a very important area of UCL's activity as well as all aspects of the taught student experience. One of the proposed amendments was for EdCom to provide regular reporting to AB, which AC supported.

c. AB would need to consider how to increase the proportion of agenda time it devoted to consideration of educational standards including the student experience, to make the most of the new emphasis on interaction between EdCom and AB.

d. In terms of the membership issues, it was suggested that these be addressed at an appropriate point in the future.

e. In terms of the 12 elected members by AB, clarification was required over whether that was in addition to, or included, the 3 current elected members. AC noted that it was to achieve an overall number of 12 elected members.

3.3. AC approved the proposed revisions to EdCom's terms of reference, constitution and membership, subject to there being further review in the future.

4.   Academic Committee Sub-Committees Terms of Reference (Paper 2-04)

4.1.   AC approved the Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for its sub-committees for 2020-21.

5.   Minutes of the meetings held on 26 June 2020 and 3 November 2020

5.1.   AC approved the minutes of the meetings held on 26 June 2020 [Minutes 40-55, 2019-20] and 3 November 2020 [Minute 1, 2020-21].

6.   Matters arising from the Minutes

6A.   Lecturecast (Minute 44.3, 2019-20)

6A.1.   Subsequent to the June meeting of AC, the Provost's SMT considered and approved that Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) be turned on universally for all Lecturecast recordings. The ASR technology was free until 31 December 2020 under an agreement with Echo360 and SMT had also approved the subsequent funding required to maintain the universal ASR service.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

7. Provost's Business

7.1. The Chair reported the following items to AC:

Coronavirus

a. UCL was now at week 7 of term and students were being taught successfully online with high quality materials. This was a huge achievement and required a university wide effort with people working extremely hard to move the materials online. The Chair noted that the Students' Union had produced an open letter thanking staff for all their efforts (http://studentsunionucl.org/blogs/jim-onyemenam/open-letter-to-provost-and-ucls-teaching-community), which he considered to be most remarkable. UCL was aware of the impact of the pandemic on staff workloads as well as on staff and student mental health and well-being. Additional funding had been allocated to faculties to support staff where student numbers had increased.

Enrolment

b. Student enrolment figures were very good and student fees received were roughly in line with previous years.

Research

c. Professor David Price, Vice-Provost (Research) provided an update on key achievements in research. The European Space Agency (ESA) had formally adopted Ariel, a mission led by UCL scientists that was dedicated to studying the nature, formation and evolution of planets outside our solar system that was due to launch at the end of this decade. Institute for Education (IOE) colleagues had been named as finalists for the Economic Social Research Council's (ESRC) prestigious Celebrating Impact Prize. There had also been two UCL Scopus Early Career Researcher awards and two European Research Council Synergy Grants.

Entrepreneurship

d. Dr Celia Caulcott, Vice-Provost (Enterprise) reported that UCL had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the London Borough of Camden. The entrepreneurship programme had attracted 145 PhD students so far.

8. AC Annual Report to Academic Board and Council (Paper 2-05)

8.1. AC endorsed its Annual Report for 2019-20 and recommended that it be forwarded to AB and Council for formal approval.

9.   Principal Theme 2 Annual Report (Paper 2-06)

9.1.   Professor Anthony Smith, Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) introduced the Principal Theme 2, Education Strategy Annual Report. The key points made were:

   a.   The report had been discussed and received by EdCom and would be considered by Council.
   b.   The 2019-2020 academic year had been a year like no other and 2020 was also looking to be equally remarkable. However, UCL was continuing to ensure that it offered students a great education and enriching experience.
   c.   Special thanks were given to the student body for their support and excellent partnership working and to UCL staff who moved to remote teaching and online assessment in a very short space of time. However, it was recognised that this had had a significant impact on the workload for staff.
   d.   In relation to assessment, in order to mitigate the impact of the disruption a 'no detriment' approach to progressions and degree classifications was put in place. This resulted in an 8.1% increase in good degrees (first and 2.1 degrees combined) awarded.
   e.   In relation to performance against objectives, objective two to embed the Connected Curriculum across UCL had changed to green-amber. Objective 3 had been upgraded to amber to reflect the huge amount of work undertaken to address and resolve the challenges of assessment and feedback. Objective 6 to develop a teaching state that was fit for purpose had been downgraded to amber-red. Objective 7 about establishing a digital learning infrastructure had changed to green in light of the significant strengthening of UCL's infrastructure to respond to the pandemic.

9.2   The following points were made in discussion:

   a.   The Chair commended the huge amount of work that had been undertaken to respond rapidly to the pandemic, led by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs), and the great teamwork.
   b.   In terms of the teaching estate, it was likely that the way the estate was used would change but that would require a longer-term vision to be developed once the current situation had settled down.
   c.   Students were known to be very positive about UCL's digital education provision. At the Arts and Humanities student town hall meeting yesterday, first year undergraduates were keen that this provision did not cease once the pandemic was over.
   d.   UCL's IT infrastructure was commended for being able to cope with the sudden massive pressure from staff and students.

e.   The Education Strategy was due to expire in 2021 and it was intended that preparation of a new version be delayed by a year.

f.   At its meeting yesterday, Library Committee commended the work of Library Services during the pandemic.

9.3.   AC received the Principal Theme 2, Education Strategy Annual Report.

10.   Annual Accountability Return 2019-20: Quality Assurance (Paper 2-07)

10.1.   Dr Helen Matthews, Director of Academic Services introduced UCL's Annual Accountability Return 2019-20: Quality Assurance. The key points made were:

a.   The report would enable AC to provide assurance to Council that UCL was complying with the OfS ongoing conditions of registration B1-B5 around quality and standards and the student experience and the associated terms and conditions of funding.

b.   It was noted that the OfS was currently undertaking a consultation on some changes to be made to its regulatory framework for higher education.

c.   In light of the pandemic, all teaching had been moved on line as well as examinations had been moved online. The Academic Regulations had been modified and UCL had developed a no detriment policy for classifications to ensure that students were not disadvantaged by the changes in teaching and assessment.

d.   UCL had implemented a revised version of the Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) in order to provide a greater focus on continuous improvement.

e.   Some of UCL's Internal Quality Reviews had been delayed as they had been due to take place in Spring and Summer Terms 2020 and them using an alternative light touch process in 2021 was under consideration.

f.   A summary of student complaints was included.

g.   All the actions shown in the action plan update had been completed apart from a review of the implementation of the impact of the new undergraduate award regulations. This would be undertaken once the cohort for which the new rules applied graduated in 2021.

h.   The next annual return would include analysis of the impact of the pandemic on degree outcomes and the quality framework.

10.2.   AC received the Annual Accountability Assurance Report 2019/20: Quality Assurance.

11.   UCL Revenue Sharing Policy (Paper 2-08)

11.1.   Dr Celia Caulcott, Vice-Provost (Enterprise) introduced the proposed minor changes to be made to UCL's Revenue Sharing Policy. The key points made were:

a.   The Revenue Sharing Policy was last updated in 2014 and implemented with effect from January 2015.

b.   The changes proposed were technical changes, prompted by revisions to UCL's Intellectual Property Policy (IPP) and implementation of a new Declaration of Interests and Disclosure of Conflicts Policy, and would bring UCL in line with the operation of other institutions.

c.   The main changes surrounded: (i) *Revenue Distributions* – which remained the same but an additional provision had been included to allow for more flexibility for faculties and departments to work with UCL Finance and Business Affairs to ensure appropriate management of income; (ii) *Students* – had been added to the policy to ensure the policy addressed revenue sharing for students included within the IPP; (iii) *Share of Equity* – had been expanded to provide more detail on equity through commercialisation.

d.   It was noted that the associated online training modules for Intellectual Property and Disclosure of Conflict and Declaration of Interest would be launched next week across UCL.

11.2.   The following points were made in discussion:

a.   AC considered that bringing students into the policy was very important to avoid any potential conflicts between academic staff and students where Intellectual Property was co-created.

b.   AC considered the revisions to be sensible and commended the associated consultation process with a number of UCL officers including Faculty Deans.

11.3.   AC approved the proposal that the amendments to UCL's Revenue Sharing Policy be recommended to Council for formal approval.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

12.   UCL Public and Community Engagement Strategy 2020-27 (Paper 2-09)

12.1.   AC approved the UCL Public and Community Engagement Strategy 2020-27.

13.   Annual Report for session 2019-20 – Education Committee (Paper 2-10)

13.1.   AC received the Education Committee Annual Report 2019-20.

14. Annual Report for session 2019-20 – Research Degrees Committee (Paper 2-11)

14.1. AC received the Research Degrees Committee Annual Report 2019-20.

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, 8 June 2020; 30 July 2020; 6 October 2020 (unconfirmed);
b. The minutes of Library Committee, 25 June 2020 (unconfirmed);
c. The minutes of Research Degrees Committee, 3 June 2020;
d. The minutes of Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee, 9 June 2020 (unconfirmed).

16. Expression of Thanks - Vice-Provost (Enterprise)

16.1. The Chair noted that this was the last AC meeting to be attended by Dr Celia Caulcott who would retire from UCL at end January 2021. AC noted her contribution to the development of innovation and enterprise at UCL as well as her role as Vice-Provost (Enterprise). AC expressed their thanks for all her work and wished her well for the future.

17. Expression of thanks - President and Provost

17.1. This was the last meeting of AC to be chaired by Professor Michael Arthur ahead of his retirement from UCL in early January 2021. The Provost noted that 2020 had been an extraordinary year and that he had agreed to stay on in the role for a few further months until his successor was able to start at UCL, before the current pandemic had started in the UK. The Provost noted that it had been a great honour to lead such an amazing institution as UCL and expressed enormous support for AC and to all members for their input.

17.2. As Vice-Chair, the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) gave reflections on the legacy of Professor Arthur and noted that he had developed a great working relationship with UCL's student community. AC members expressed their sincere thanks to Professor Arthur and wished him all the best for the future.

18. Dates of next meetings

18.1. The next meetings of Academic Committee would be held as follows:
Thursday 4 March 2021 at 10.00am
Thursday 24 June 2021 at 10.00am

Thursday 18 November 2021 at 10.00am.

Ms Rachel Port
Secretary to Academic Committee
January 2021