

## ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

20 February 2018

### MINUTES

*PRESENT:*

Professor Anthony Smith (*Vice-Chair*)

Ms Wendy Appleby, Dr Paul Ayris; Dr Simon Banks; Dame Nicola Brewer; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Dr Celia Caulcott; Mr Mark Crawford; Dr Melanie Ehren; Professor Dilly Fung; Dr Arne Hofmann; Dr Sarabajaya Kumar; Dr Ruth Siddall; Dr Olga Thomas; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Alan Penn; Ms Aiysha Qureshi; Professor Jane Rendell; Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson; Professor Gabriella Vigliocco; Dr Andrew Wills

*In attendance:* Ms Denise Long (Director of Student Support and Wellbeing); Mr Derfel Owen (Secretary to Academic Committee); Ms Bella Malins (Director of Access and Admissions); Ms Rachel Port (Minutes)

Apologies for absence were received from: Provost and President; Dr Tracey Allen; Professor Mark Emberton; Professor Becky Francis; Dr Clare Goudy; Professor Graham Hart; Professor David Lomas; Dr Hynek Pikhart; Professor David Price; Professor Geraint Rees; Professor David Shanks; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Alan Thompson; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker.

*Key to abbreviations*

AB	Academic Board
AC	Academic Committee
GEO	Global Engagement Office
HEBCIS	Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HR	Human Resources
KEF	Knowledge Exchange Framework
LSE	London School of Economics
PaLS	Division of Psychology and Language Sciences
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SMT	Senior Management Team
SPS	Student Psychological Services
SSW	Student Support and Wellbeing
TEF	Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

**Preliminary business**

17 **MINUTES OF 2 NOVEMBER 2017 MEETING**

- 17.1 **Approved** – the Minutes of the Academic Committee meeting held on 2 November 2017 [AC Minutes 1-16, 2017-18].

18 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

[see Minute 20 below]

<b>Matters for discussion</b>
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19 **PROVOST'S BUSINESS**

- 19.1 **Received** – an oral update from Professor Anthony Smith, Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) and Vice-Chair of AC, on behalf of the Provost and President.

- 19.2 The Provost was aware of concern amongst UCL's staff and students about the possible disruption that could be caused by the forthcoming industrial action in relation to the USS pensions dispute. Both the Provost and Vice-Chair had received a high volume of letters from students reflecting their support for this strike action. However, some had queried whether they would be penalised if they did not cross the picket line. A Task and Finish Group had been set up to look at the possible impact of the industrial action on students to be chaired by the Director of HR and it included both the Vice-Chair and the Registrar in its membership. While the impact of the industrial action was unknown at this stage, it was reported that the Group would take the principle that students were not to be disadvantaged in examinations and assessment.

- 19.3 In relation to examination materials that would have already been prepared to cover material that would have been taught during the strike period, it was intended that the Faculty Tutor Forum would be invited to consider making some provision around that issue.

20 **AC ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17 TO ACADEMIC BOARD AND COUNCIL**

[PAPER 2-11 (17-18)]

- 20.1 **Received** - the updated AC Annual Report introduced by Derfel Owen, AC Secretary and Director of Academic Services.
- 20.2 AB had considered the previous version of the AC Annual Report and resolved that it should include information about its delegated power to AC that was: 'To consider and advise the Council upon all academic matters and questions affecting the educational policy of the College'. The updated version of the report now included coverage of matters that fell within the powers delegated by AB to AC.

**RESOLVED**

- 20.3 That the updated AC Annual Report 2016-17 be recommended for formal approval at the next AB meeting.

**ACTION: AB Secretary**

21 **ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17: UCL INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE**  
[PAPER 2-12 (17-18)]

- 21.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the above paper by the Vice-Provost (Enterprise and London), Dr Celia Caulcott.
- 21.2 The UCL Innovation and Enterprise Strategy 2016-2021, ‘Transforming knowledge and ideas into action’ challenged UCL to address five strategic priorities. An update on progress towards the strategy implementation was appended to Paper 2-12 (17-18). In order to encourage faculty engagement, weekly “Open Door” sessions were taking place, the UCL Innovation and Enterprise senior team had attended faculty meetings to present the strategy, and a faculty strategy development workshop was held in December.
- 21.3 The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) was announced by the government in October 2017 to sit alongside the REF and TEF. It consisted of two key strands of: (i) principles and good practice, that would involve development of a concordat on university knowledge exchange and (ii) metrics-based assessment, based primarily upon HEBCIS. KEF was currently expected to be implemented in late 2018, following a sector consultation in early summer.
- 21.4 HEBCIS was a wide-ranging HESA return that covered a range of aspects of Knowledge Exchange. The advent of KEF would require UCL to make some systems changes to the way in which data were recorded, gathered and analysed in this area as the current system did not allow for HEBCIS eligible income to be identified on UCL’s general ledger.

22 **TEACHING EXCELLENCE AND STUDENT OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK - UPDATE**

- 22.1 **Received** – an oral update from Professor Anthony Smith, Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs).
- 22.2 UCL was preparing for the next TEF exercise in 2019-20, where the quality of teaching and learning would be at subject level. A pilot was currently underway with two potential models for TEF 2020 being tested known as Model A and Model B. Under Model A, assessment would be at subject level ‘by exception’. An initial hypothesis would be generated by HEFCE using the metrics. Fuller assessment would be undertaken for subjects where their initial hypothesis differed from the institution-level rating. Under Model B, assessment would be ‘bottom up’ whereby each subject was fully assessed to give subject-level ratings. These would feed into the provider-level assessment and rating.
- 22.3 UCL was not participating in the pilot and had instead been provided with subject-level metrics for all its subject areas to examine its potential results by testing the above models. It was hoped that some digests showing how subject-TEF might work would be issued to departments later this term. In response to a query, the Vice-Chair did not consider that the outcomes from the pilot would

filter down towards programme level or necessitate changes to the TEF. In the meantime, UCL was monitoring the pilot exercise and while the pilot results would be restricted, a report on the lessons learned from this exercise would be made available next year.

23 **LEAD OFFICER REPORT 2016-17: STUDENT SUPPORT AND WELLBEING**  
[PAPER 2-13 (17-18)]

- 23.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the above paper by Denise Long, Director of Student Support and Wellbeing.
- 23.2 SSW had developed and implemented a range of innovations during 2016-17 to improve student wellbeing support and the overall student experience. However, there was an ongoing challenge to meet the yearly increasing demands and expectations of both students and the wider community. An overview of key highlights and issues in 2016-17 was provided as follows:
- 3,023 students registered for psychological therapeutic support with SSW's Student Psychological Services in 2016-17;
  - An external review of the overall provision of mental health support was commissioned by UCL and it completed its work in May 2017. SSW had developed a UCL Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan arising from its findings. The Action Plan would form a fundamental part of a UCL Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework currently under development;
  - SSW and Division of PaLS were exploring how best to support students with the most complex health conditions;
  - UCL had actively promoted the importance of meningitis vaccinations as the uptake of the immunisation by school leavers was very low. No cases of meningitis were reported in 2016-17;
  - SSW supported students studying abroad and intended to make this area of support more robust and formalised;
  - Care first was available 24/7 all year round to students and there was increased usage of its service. SSW had expanded the partnership and support on offer for students provided through Care first;
  - SSW had improved its arrangement with *Rape Crisis* to increase the level of specialist support to students, as well as developing an e-learning module for students;
  - SSW had improved its digital content for student support and wellbeing matters;
  - The New Student Centre would open in January 2019 and SSW would be relocating many of its wellbeing services to this Centre.
- 23.3 It was reported that there was no confirmed plan for the permanent relocation of SSW staff and services who were not moving to the New Student Centre in January 2019. AC considered that UCL Estates should be encouraged to confirm a plan urgently.

23.4 The Director of SSW was aware of student concerns about waiting times at SPS and the Students' Union campaign to increase resources available at SPS in light of increasing demand. However, SSW had already implemented a number of changes to manage the demand from students for immediate and solution focused support. The Students' Union Sabbatical Officers appreciated the changes made by SSW as well all the work undertaken by SPS, but was campaigning due to student dissatisfaction in this area. AC considered that more collaborative working was required between SSW and the Students' Union to share information and raise awareness.

24 **CHRONIC UNDERFUNDING OF UCL'S STUDENT PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**  
[PAPER 2-14 (17-18)]

24.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the above paper prepared by the Sabbatical Officers, introduced by Mark Crawford, Postgraduate Students' Officer. [A revised version was tabled at the meeting and is issued with these Minutes as Paper 2-14 (17-18) – Revised Version].

24.2 Further to the above, an open letter was signed by staff, the Students' Union and the local Trades Union branches to UCL's SMT requesting additional funding for SPS. The Vice-Chair confirmed that the Provost wished to meet with the Registrar, Director of SSW and the Students' Union to discuss the issues.

24.3 The Students' Union intended to put their paper forward to the upcoming meeting of Council. Members considered that the paper required greater factual accuracy and should be evidence based to maximise impact.

25 **PREVENT AT UCL**  
[PAPER 2-15 (17-18)]

25.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the paper from Bella Malins, Director of Access and Admissions.

25.2 UCL had a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. In July 2017, the Prevent lead at UCL changed and a review was undertaken on progress in meeting the duty. An annual report on UCL's compliance with this duty was recently submitted to HEFCE. The outcome was expected in March but it was anticipated that concerns would be noted about recent events involving external speakers at UCL that made the national press. It was intended that a new Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and an associated policy for the management of external speakers at UCL would be submitted to the next AC meeting for consideration and for subsequent submission to AB and Council for formal approval.

25.3 An online training course had been developed and launched on UCL's Moodle pages. A new training programme was being developed in liaison with the Students' Union and UCL Security and Crime Science.

<b>Other matters for approval or information</b>
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- 26     **ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2016-17 – EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
      [PAPER 2-16 (17-18)]
- 26.1    **Received** – the Education Committee Annual Report for 2016-17 session.
- 27     **ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2016-17 – LIBRARY COMMITTEE**  
      [PAPER 2-17 (17-18)]
- 27.1    **Received** – the Library Committee Annual Report for 2016-17 session.
- 28     **ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2016-17 – STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE**  
      [PAPER 2-18 (17-18)]
- 28.1    **Received** – the Student Experience Committee Annual Report for 2016-17 session.
- 29     **ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2016-17 – STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS AND FUNDING COMMITTEE**  
      [PAPER 2-19 (17-18)]
- 29.1    **Received** – the Student Recruitment, Admission and Funding Committee Annual Report for 2016-17 session.
- 30     **REPORTS OF SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS ETC OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**
- 30.1    **Received** – AC officers received the following sets of minutes since the last meeting of AC:
- Education Committee – 13 December 2017 (unconfirmed)
  - Library Committee – 5 June 2017, 6 December 2017 (unconfirmed)
  - Research Governance Committee – 7 June 2017
  - Student Experience Committee – 7 November 2017
  - Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee – 25 June 2017.
- 31     **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
- 31A    **Global Engagement Office**
- 31A.1   The Vice-Provost (International) would submit an annual report on progress against UCL 2034 Principal Theme 6 to the next AC meeting. Under the Global Engagement Strategy, which sets out how UCL would deliver this Principal Theme, GEO aimed to establish at least 3-5 global anchor partners by 2020. UCL had already secured its first anchor partnership with Peking University and partnerships with 3 more global institutions were looking very promising.

**31B Professor Dilly Fung**

31B.1 Professor Dilly Fung would be leaving UCL to take up the post of Pro-Director for Education at the LSE. The Vice-Chair expressed his thanks on behalf of the committee to Professor Fung for her huge contribution to educational enhancement across UCL in leading the Arena Centre for Research-Based Education and wished her well in her new role.

**32 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

32.1 The dates of upcoming AC meetings were as follows:

- Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2018, 10.00am
- Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018, 10.00am.

DERFEL OWEN

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May 2018





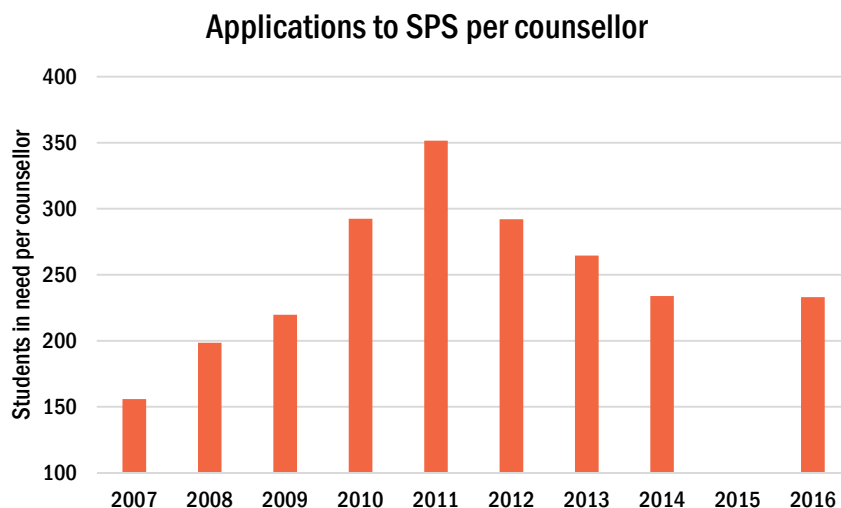


## Chronic Underfunding of UCL's Student Psychological Services: A Reputational Liability

### Introduction and context

The number of students choosing to disclose a mental health condition to their university has increased fivefold in the last decade; however, many universities have not increased their funding for on campus counselling in response. This is worsened by the fact that the National Health Service increasingly depends upon higher education bodies to support students' mental health, and provides fewer resources for this demographic as a result.

In few institutions has this nationwide trend been more acute than at UCL, where a dramatic increase in student numbers has not been matched in adequate resources for Student Psychological Services. The graph below illustrates the increase in the ratio of 'students in need' – that is, the number of students requesting support from SPS – to counsellors over the past decade. No data is publically available for 2015:<sup>1</sup>



Between 2007 and now, the number of applicants to SPS has increased from 1000 to 3100: but the number of counsellors has increased by only 5.5 to 13.1. This translates to a 49 percent increase in the ratio of students requesting psychological support to the number of counsellors since 2007.

<sup>1</sup> All figures used in these calculations can be found in the students' union's 2016 report *Heads Up: Reporting on Mental Health*, accessible online at: [http://studentsunionucl.org/sites/uclu.org/files/u198046/documents/heads\\_up\\_-\\_reporting\\_on\\_mental\\_health\\_online\\_final.pdf](http://studentsunionucl.org/sites/uclu.org/files/u198046/documents/heads_up_-_reporting_on_mental_health_online_final.pdf).

The repercussions of this have naturally been severe for the UCL community. While we do not have quantifiable waiting times available for this report, research from the students' union indicates that most applicants wait between two and three months before the beginning of treatment. This is of course extremely poor by the standards of the sector; in May 2017, the *Guardian* reported the average waiting time for a university therapist to be 15 days, a figure drastically outstripped by UCL's.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, a recent Freedom of Information Request confirmed that, in the year 2016-17, the service lacked the capacity to see 700, or 25 percent, of all those who registered for support.<sup>3</sup> What happened to these students and whether they ever received treatment is unknown; certainly it has led to ballooning waiting times.

## Inaction by UCL

The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) recommends a minimum ratio of counsellors to students of 1:1358.<sup>4</sup> This would mean translate to 29.5 counsellors at UCL - or 16.4 more than is currently provided for.

The current recommendation suggested by the students' union, of 6.5 additional counsellors, is however much less than this, and is based on calculations devised in our 2016 *Heads Up* report.<sup>5</sup> This would amount to approximately £340,000 in annual salary costs, a modest investment for an institution of UCL's turnover, and one that would provide a useful trial prior to considering HEPI's much more substantial recommendations.

These concerns have been raised repeatedly over the last two years, with over 2000 students signing a petition in early 2017 calling for additional resources for on campus counselling. Nevertheless, the union has been refused these resources at every turn.

The students' union does not recognise the modest number of changes made to UCL's mental health services to be a serious effort to deal with the crisis currently faced by the student community. In December 2017, the following reforms were announced by Student Support and Wellbeing:

- » Drop-in sessions with non-accredited Welfare Advisers;
- » Out-of-hours telephone counselling for all students;
- » An app to inform students of the support services;
- » An online digital CBT service.

Certainly, these are improvements to a service starved of necessary funding. But whereas they might be welcomed in good faith as complementary to a properly resourced service, they are not themselves a substitute for healthcare - which would mean readily available support from clinically trained therapists.

It is also the union's understanding that 2018 will see a triaging system rolled out in SPS as based upon the 'Cardiff model'; that is, where applicants are provided with an initial appointment soon

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/may/23/number-university-dropouts-due-to-mental-health-problems-trebles>

<sup>3</sup> An FOI from August 2017 found 3054 registrations with SPS: [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/mental\\_health\\_statistics\\_30](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/mental_health_statistics_30). Meanwhile, *Heads Up* identified the capacity of the service to be 2305.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/STRICTLY-EMBARGOED-UNTIL-22-SEPT-Hepi-Report-88-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *Heads Up*.

after registration, followed by a tailored number of sessions as deemed appropriate by the specialist thereafter.

Mental health triaging in the context of a shortage of counsellors does, however, raise many serious concerns. Many students may not feel comfortable disclosing private issues in a single session, very often requiring a relationship of trust to be built up with the counsellor first. It is therefore difficult for a psychologist to decide on what treatment may be appropriate. In addition, the practical reality is that a long period of time - perhaps many months - is likely to take place between the initial appointment and the beginning of sessions for most students, during which time a mild condition if untreated can rapidly and seriously deteriorate. Triaging is therefore not adequate without additional resources.

SSW have also refused to share with the students' union the SUMS consultancy report following the research and recommendations of which these changes were introduced. For the sake of transparency, we again insist that this report be shared widely with both the union and the wider student community.

## **Mental health underfunding as a reputational liability**

In December 2017, hundreds of representatives across UCL, the students' union and the local trade union branches signed an open letter to the senior management team calling for additional funding for SPS; this included dozens of heads of departments, senior lecturers, readers and professors and personal tutors, including a high concentration of specialists in the university's world-renowned psychology division.<sup>6</sup> This letter received no response.

As a result, the students' union has had no choice but to organise to make the underfunding of mental health by UCL a reputational liability for the university - by informing the wider public, including prospective applicants, of the refusal to invest in the core support services needed by the student body. The contrasting willingness of the university to invest comparatively huge amounts of resources in other areas, together with its large annual financial surpluses, has contributed to the narrative of a university that has made the active choice not to invest in its student support services:

- » An FOI request by student newspaper *The Cheese Grater* that discovered how UCL pays 196 members of staff over £140,000 per year, including the Provost, whose annual salary outstrips the funds currently being requested by the students' union for SPS;
- » The multimillion contingency fund, and how it has not been used to fill the funding gap in the context of an institutional mental health crisis;
- » An 'attendance monitoring' project, highly unpopular with the student body, has been budgeted by the Registry at almost £650,000 – twice the funds requested for SPS – and has been justified under the label of supporting students' wellbeing. This narrative cannot be accepted while core support services remain underfunded.
- » An informal meeting of academic board members recently voted by 94 percent majority to express no confidence in UCL governance following a discussion in student mental health featured heavily. This vote is due to be repeated at a Students' Union General Assembly on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February.

We have already organised a large-scale disruption of UCL's annual Graduate Open Day on December 6, following a series of smaller actions to build the base of the campaign that has seen a phenomenal amount of support from across the student body. The students' union will continue to organise protests, direct action and disruptions of prominent marketing events (reaching out to the university's target recruitment locations worldwide) if adequate funding is not secured.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://studentsunionucl.org/forms/open-letter-to-ucl-senior-management-calling-for-additional-mental-health-funding>

The students' union calls upon UCL Council to heed the requests of our academic community's students and staff, and to fund Student Psychological Services with the £340,000 we deem so vital.

*Mark Crawford, Postgraduate Students' Officer, on behalf the Students' Union campaign UCL:  
Fund Our Mental Health Services.*