LONDON'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Thursday 20 October 2011

MINUTES

PRESENT:
Professor Mike Ewing (*Chair*)

Mr Bob Allan
Mr David Ashton
Ms Su Bryant
Professor Steve Caddick
Mr Neil Chowdhury
Dr Brenda Cross
Mr Luke Durigan
Professor Vince Emery
Dr Caroline Essex
Mr Marco Federighi
Professor Anthony Finkelstein
Dr Christine Hoffman
Professor Alan Penn
Dr Hilary Richards
Ms Olga Thomas
Ms Susan Ware

In attendance: Mr Jason Clarke (Secretary); Ms Clare Goudy; Ms Harriet Lilley and Ms Bella Malins.

Apologies for absence were received from: Provost and President; Professor David Bogle; Dr Helen Chatterjee; Professor David Green; Professor Graham Hart; Professor Nikos Konstantinidis; Professor Patrick Maxwell; Mr Tim Perry; Professor Michael Worton; Professor Henry Woudhuysen;

Key to abbreviations:

AC	Academic Committee
ACWG	Academic Committee Working Group
AM	Annual Monitoring
AugAM	Augmented Annual Monitoring
FTC	Faculty Teaching Committee
GPA	Grade Point Average
IEPI	International Energy Policy Institute
MFL	Modern Foreign Language
QMEC	Quality Management and Enhancement Committee
RAS	Registry and Academic Services

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE, CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP 2011-12

Received

1.1 At APPENDIX AC 1/01 (11-12) - AC's terms of reference.

1.2 At APPENDIX AC 1/02 (11-12) - AC's constitution and membership for session 2011-12.

Reported

1.3 The AC Chair welcomed the following new members of the Committee:

- Professor Steve Caddick, Vice-Provost (Enterprise);
- Professor Alan Thompson, Dean, Faculty of Brain Sciences *(in absentia)*;
- Professor Patrick Maxwell, Dean, Faculty of Medical Sciences *(in absentia)*;
- Professor Graham Hart, Dean, Faculty of Population Health Sciences *(in absentia)*;
- Mr Luke Durigan, Education and Campaigns Officer, UCL Union;
- Mr Neil Chowdhury, Medical and Postgraduate Students Officer, UCL Union.

1.4 The AC Chair welcomed back to AC, Professor Vince Emery, Acting Chair of Education Committee.

2 MINUTES

Approved

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 7 July 2011*[AC Mins. 41-57, 2010-11]*, were confirmed by the Committee and signed by the AC Chair, subject to the correction of the following name of members present: Ms Jennie Marie (*vice* Ms Sue Bryant).

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

[See Minute 5 below.]

4 COUNCIL WHITE PAPER 2011-2021

Noted

4.1 The Provost's Green Paper had been adopted, subject to minor amendment, by UCL Council at its meeting on 6 July 2011 and had been published as the Council White Paper 2011-2021.

4.2 The Committee was invited to consider the issues covered in the White Paper and specifically those proposals which fall within the Committee's remit, with a view to identifying priority areas for action by AC and its subordinate bodies.

Received

4.3 At APPENDIX AC 1/03 (11-12)[1], the Council White Paper 2011-21 and at APPENDIX AC 1/08 (11-12), a note by the AC Chair on strategic educational activity for UCL arising from the Council White Paper 2011-21.

4.4 An oral report by the AC Chair.

[1] Also available on the UCL website at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/white-paper/

Reported

4.5 The AC Chair reported on issues from the Council White Paper 2011-2021 as noted at section one of APPENDIX AC 1/08 (11-12), in particular:

- Modern Foreign Language requirement from 2012 entry – this policy had been implemented and from the 2012-13 session all new undergraduate students will be required to have a GCSE at grade C (or equivalent) in a MFL.

- Consultation on semesterisation – semesterisation has advantages and disadvantages and consultations with the Faculty Tutors had been very useful in raising issues. A draft position paper from the Vice-Provost/AC Chair would go to the December meeting of AC for discussion, prior to its submission to the Provost in January 2012.

- Grade Point Average – an AC Working Group would shortly be established to look into the issue of the GPA, with a view to a preliminary report from the Working Group being submitted to the next meeting of AC. It was anticipated that GPA would be piloted in May/June 2012. If the pilot proved successful, there would be a period where both the GPA system and the current degree classification system would run concurrently. Under the GPA system, each module would be graded, and this might affect the way modules were taught and assessed.

- Simplification of entry points – UCL currently has over 200 programmes to which undergraduate students can apply. As noted in the White Paper, more generic entry points, such as the Natural Sciences and the Biomedical Sciences degree programmes, have been very successful. In future, departments could offer a single first year curriculum, with students deciding which specialist branch to pursue in the second year. While such a system would resolve several issues relating to undergraduate admissions, it's implications would require full debate and careful consideration.

Discussion

4.6 It was noted that current issues with the Common Timetable would need to be resolved before more generic entry points could be offered to undergraduate students, as this could result in larger numbers of students taking particular modules. It would be important for students to register early for modules so that suitable rooms could be allocated. Members of AC noted that a major change in scheduling might be required to ensure that space was used as efficiently as possible. It was noted from the recent Space Utilisation Survey that lectures tended to be in the morning with practical/laboratory work in the afternoon which put pressure on rooms at particular times of the day. Members of AC commented, however, that technical issues with the Common Timetable should not impede large-scale curriculum reform.

4.7 It was reported that departmental representatives within the Faculty of Engineering Sciences had met to discuss the Council White Paper 2011-2021. The response to the White Paper had been largely positive. The AC Chair commented that issues arising from discussions on the White Paper at departmental and faculty level would be very useful, and suggested that other faculties discuss the issues at their next Faculty Teaching Committee meeting. Issues raised at these meetings should be sent to the AC Chair by

November. If the FTC meeting was due to be held after November, the AC Chair suggested that a special FTC meeting be convened to discuss the issues raised in the Council White Paper 2011-2021.

4.8 On the issue of the possible introduction of the GPA, various views were expressed by AC members. One member noted that in many secondary schools, pupils are taught to the curriculum, whereas university students are encouraged to think broadly. Consequently, any assessment system (whether the current degree classification system or the GPA) should take account of the ways in which students are taught and learn. Another commented that the current degree classification system is understood by employers and other outside higher education and UCL should think very carefully about unilaterally moving away from a system that is broadly understood and familiar, to one which is not well-understood, as this could place UCL's graduates at a disadvantage compared to those of other leading UK universities. It was suggested, therefore, that UCL further explore the risks and benefits of the GPA system on UCL student employability in the private sector, by discussing with companies who regularly employ UCL graduates what their response might be to the implementation of GPA at UCL.

5 DEADLINES FOR ADMISSION AND ENROLMENT

[AC Min.47A, 2010-11]

Noted

5.1 At its meeting on 7 July 2011, AC received an oral report from the Director of Registry and Academic Services on the implementation of deadlines for admission and enrolment. AC Resolved to approve the flexible approach to admissions and enrolment outlined in the report from the Director of RAS for entry to 2011-12; that the Director of RAS and relevant colleagues review the operation of deadlines for admission and enrolment in subsequent sessions and submit further proposals to AC in due course.

Received

5.2 At APPENDIX AC 1/04 (11-12), a paper from the Director of Student Services and the Head of Outreach and Admissions on admission and enrolment deadlines in future admissions cycles.

5.3 An oral report by Ms Bella Malins, Head of Outreach and Admissions.

Reported

5.4 The Head of Outreach and Admissions noted that the deadlines for admissions and enrolment for future sessions in the paper at APPENDIX AC 1/04 (11-12) reflected the deadlines which had been put in place for the 2011-12 session. Deadlines were required so that students did not miss their induction and teaching, as well as allowing students requiring Tier 4 visas to apply in a timely manner.

Discussion

5.5 AC members noted that some part-time postgraduate taught programmes often had late applications from students due to late employer and/or funding approval, and that deadlines could create problems for certain cohorts. The AC Chair noted that the deadline for applications could be extended in certain cases, and that there would be some degree of flexibility for UK/EU students.

RESOLVED

5.6 That AC approve the use of enrolment and admission deadlines on an on-going basis as set out in APPENDIX AC 1/04 (11-12); and that the Dean of Students (Academic) be responsible for monitoring the use of deadlines in collaboration with the Director of Student Services and the Head of Outreach and Admissions.

6 **ANNUAL MONITORING – REPORT FROM THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE**
[AC Min.46, 2010-11]

Noted

6.1 At its meeting on 7 July 2011, AC received an oral interim report from the Chair of QMEC on key issues emerging from the Annual Monitoring and Augmented AM processes and noted that QMEC would be submitting a full evaluation report to AC at its next meeting.

Received

6.2 At APPENDIX AC 1/05 (11-12) – the evaluation report from QMEC on the 2010-11 AM and AugAM round.

6.3 An oral report from Professor Mike Ewing, as Chair of QMEC.

Reported

6.4 The AC Chair reported that the key issues raised by faculty AM reports related to quality and inadequacy of teaching space. Teaching space was assigned by Room Bookings based on student numbers from the previous year, but often student numbers had increased resulting in inadequate room allocation. Given the importance of the student experience, inadequate teaching spaces were not acceptable.

Discussion

6.5 Members of AC noted that in the past, some departments had incorrectly estimated class sizes, resulting in inappropriate room allocations, and this was one reason why student data from the previous year was being used to allocated teaching space. It was also noted that departments were able to inform Room Bookings if they thought that there would be a significant difference in student numbers compared with the previous year.

6.6 Some members of AC noted that while technical issues, whether it be the Common Timetable or room bookings, should not dictate curricula design and delivery, it was possible that changing how lectures are delivered (*eg* splitting two-hour teaching sessions into one-hour sessions, repeating teaching sessions for popular modules, video streaming of popular modules *etc*) can alleviate current problems and avoid overcrowding in teaching spaces (which is a health and safety issue) and enhance the student experience.

6.7 The Committee agreed that there had often been an unhealthy discourse between faculties/departments and Room Bookings, and that an open dialogue would have positive results. It was also noted that rooms held by faculties/departments which were not currently centrally bookable spaces, could be made available to ease pressure on space on the UCL estate.

7 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Reported

7.1 The AC Chair noted that Mr Bob Allan, the longest-serving member of AC and its predecessor the Teaching Committee, would be retiring from UCL at the end of the month. On behalf of the Committee, the AC Chair thanked Mr Allan for his valuable contribution to the work of AC, and to UCL, over many years.

8 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY POLICY INSTITUTE

Received

8.1 At APPENDIX AC 1/06 (11-12) – for information, a note from the Vice-Provost (International) on the establishment of the IEPI.

Noted

8.2 AC noted that the IEPI, established in July 2011, would be a UCL institute within UCL Australia. A proposal to establish UCL Australia as an academic department of UCL would be submitted to the forthcoming meetings of Academic Board and Council. UCL Australia will report to the Vice-Provost (International) and the new Office of International Affairs. The AC Chair noted that regular progress reports on UCL Australia, and the other overseas campuses, would be submitted to AC.

9 FACULTY TEACHING COMMITTEES

Received

9.1 At APPENDIX AC 1/07 (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 7 July 2011.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted

10.1 The next meeting of AC will take place on **Thursday 15 December 2011** at **9.00am** in **Room SB4, 118 Tottenham Court Road**.

JDC
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