



## ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Thursday 21 October 2010

### MINUTES

*PRESENT:*

Professor Michael Worton (Chair)

Provost and President  
Mr Bob Allan  
Mr David Ashton  
Dr Paul Ayris  
Professor David Bogle  
Ms Sue Bryant  
Professor Richard Catlow  
Mr Michael Chessum  
Dr Brenda Cross  
Dr Caroline Essex  
Professor Mike Ewing  
Professor David Green  
Mr Chris Hallas

Dr Christine Hoffmann  
Professor Ian Jacobs  
Professor Alan Penn  
Ms Mary Rimington  
Dr Ruth Siddall  
Ms Joan Small  
(vice Ms Olga Thomas)  
Professor Stephen Smith  
Dr Richard Tunwell  
(vice Dr Hilary Richards)  
Ms Soo Ware  
Professor Henry Woudhuysen

In attendance: Ms Julia Abbott; Mr Jason Clarke (Secretary); Ms Clare Goudy; Mr Alec Gray [for Minute 8 only].

Apologies for absence were received from: Dr Helen Chatterjee; Mr Marco Federighi; Professor Anthony Finkelstein; Professor Dame Hazel Genn; Mr Alex Nesbitt; Mr Tim Perry; Dr Hilary Richards.

*Key to abbreviations:*

AC	Academic Committee
AM	Annual Monitoring
AugAM	Augmented Annual Monitoring
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
EdCom	Education Committee
EU	European Union
FLS	Faculty of Life Sciences
FTC	Faculty Teaching Committee
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
ILTS	Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy
JSSC	Joint Staff Student Committee
PBIS	Points-based Immigration System
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QMEC	Quality Management and Enhancement Committee
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
SLMS	School of Life and Medical Sciences
SMT	(Provost's) Senior Management Team
SWS	Student Written Submission
UKCRM	UK Centre for Medical Research and Innovation
UUK	Universities UK

1 **TERMS OF REFERENCE, CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP 2010-11**

*Received*

- 1.1 At APPENDIX AC 1/01 (10-11) - AC's terms of reference.
- 1.2 At APPENDIX AC 1/02 (10-11)<sup>1</sup> - AC's constitution and membership for session 2010-11.

2 **MINUTES**

*Approved*

- 2.1 The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 24 June 2010 [*AC Mins. 65-78, 2009-10*], were confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

3 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

[*See Minutes 5, 6 and 7 below.*]

4 **FUTURE FUNDING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION FOLLOWING BROWNE REVIEW AND THE COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW**

*Received*

- 4.1 An oral report by the Provost.

*Reported*

- 4.2 The Provost noted that he had given a report on the implications of the Browne Review and the Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review to Academic Board at its meeting the previous day.
- 4.3 The Browne Review had gone beyond its original remit to review the 2004 settlement and had scoped a radically different model for the support of higher education. Also, it was important to note that the status of the Browne Review was different from that of the CSR, in that the Browne Review included a series of recommendations to the Government but it was under no obligation to accept those recommendations.
- 4.4 In relation to variable fees, it was unlikely that the final position would become clear before Christmas. This could be potentially difficult for the sector as institutions would need to know what was happening about UK/EU fees by Easter 2011 at the latest.
- 4.5 While it had been anticipated that the Browne Review would recommend that the fees cap should be lifted either completely or in a phased manner, what had not been anticipated was the removal, with some exceptions, of government funding for teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> An updated version of APPENDIX AC 1/02 (10-11) was tabled at the meeting to reflect recent changes to the Committee's membership. Full details are available from the UCL committee page at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-services/governance/committees/ac>.

- 4.6 In order to make up the funding lost, UCL would need to charge a fee of around £8k per annum. The Browne Review, however, had recommended that a levy be imposed on those institutions charging fees above a limit of £6k per annum.
- 4.7 UCL, in common with other institutions, would need to consider a range of possible options in terms of student recruitment and the future composition of its student body.
- 4.8 It had been anticipated that the CSR would announce significant cuts to the science budget and cuts in QR funding of 25% had been predicted, yet, in the event, the cut was 10%. While this was less severe than predicted it still represented a serious cut to research funding and would have serious implications for UCL. This represented a cut of between £15-20m over the period of the CSR, although it was not yet known whether, and if so how, HEFCE might modify that allocation. The Research Councils had received a flat cash funding settlement, although they would be required to find efficiency savings of £324 per annum by 2014-15. One probable consequence of this would be a decline in the number of smaller grants awarded. On a more positive note, the Government had confirmed that it would be providing funding for UKCMRI.
- 4.9 The implications of the cut in research funding would need to be considered carefully. For example, it might be necessary to re-evaluate the integration of research and teaching at UCL and whether it was acceptable that some UCL academic staff do not undertake any teaching.
- 4.10 UCL was not going to adopt a consumerist attitude whereby its students are seen as merely purchasers of education.
- 4.11 During the coming months a process of consultation would take place across UCL as to how we should respond to the very tight financial settlement.

### **Discussion**

- 4.12 In response to a question from a member of AC about the possible effect of the future fees regime for the diversity of UCL's student population, the Provost noted that UCL would remain committed to attracting outstanding students from diverse backgrounds. Some had predicted that the increase in fees might result in a growing number of students wishing to stay at home while they study and an increase in the number of students studying part-time, and that, in such a scenario, students might increasingly prefer to attend their local university for undergraduate study and then go to universities such as UCL to pursue postgraduate study.
- 4.13 One member of AC noted that while the Browne Review had not really addressed the issue of postgraduate-taught students, UCL should review its postgraduate-taught provision, especially in professionally-related areas, to ensure that such provision is being costed properly so that it is economically viable.
- 4.14 It was noted that, given the severe cuts in the teaching grant, if HEFCE were to lift its quotas on student numbers, this would have a significant effect and could result in real competition between institutions. However, while this might lead to flows of students between institutions, HEFCE would probably wish to retain an overall cap on the number of students within the sector.

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5 **REFORM OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE AND ITS SUBSTRUCTURE**

[AC Min.74, 2009-10]

[See also Minute 10A below]

**Noted**

- 5.1 At its meeting on 24 June 2010, AC received a report summarising the implications of the broader review of the UCL committee system for the implementation of the recommendations arising from AC's review of its own operations and those of its substructure, which the Committee had previously approved at its March 2010 meeting.

**Received**

- 5.2 Oral reports from the AC Secretary and the AC Chair on progress in implementing the recommendations agreed by AC following the review of the Committee and its substructure.

**Reported**

- 5.3 In his oral report, the AC Secretary noted that:
- Over the summer, revised terms of reference and constitutions for AC, JSSC and QMEC and draft terms of reference and constitutions for EdCom and RDC were posted on the AC sharepoint for consultation. Only a small number of comments had been received but some of those comments had been very detailed and had raised some important issues that needed further consideration. The proposals were amended by the AC officers in light of the feedback received.
  - JSSC and QMEC had not been dramatically affected by the changes, with the main changes affecting AC, EdCom and RDC. The terms of reference and constitution of AC has been changed to reflect the decision that it should act more as a Senate-like body. In relation to EdCom and RDC, planning meetings were being held with the Chairs and key officers to plan the business and operation of those committees. Meeting dates for all of the committees had been set or would be very shortly.
  - Officers from Academic Services, Registry and the Graduate School would be working together closely to support the Chairs and members of the new committees and would be doing all that they could to make sure the new committee structure works smoothly. A key area that was being looked at was improving how committee decisions are communicated and disseminated.
  - The current session should be seen as a transitional year as the new structure beds down. Five meetings of AC were scheduled for the 2010-11 session, but it was envisaged that once the new structure was fully up and running, AC would meet once a term. For the current session, however, the AC officers proposed to keep the five scheduled meetings in the diary, with the caveat that a meeting could be cancelled if necessary.

- 5.4 In his oral report, the AC Chair noted that:
- Under the new structure AC would be acting more like a Senate-type body and this had been reflected in the Committee's new terms of reference and constitution. For example, the Committee was now charged to maintain an overview of UCL's research strategy, which was key given UCL's commitment to research led-teaching. Also, much of the detailed business which was previously referred to AC from subordinate committees would now be dealt with by the relevant sister committee, thus allowing AC to concentrate on more strategic issues.
  - UCL and higher education would be facing some extremely challenging issues over the coming months and years, and the Chair hoped that AC would focus on these major strategic issues and how they might impact on research-led teaching and the student experience.
  - While it was not ideal that the new academic session had started with some aspects of the new system still to be finalised, the relevant colleagues and administrative officers were working hard to ensure that the new structure was fully operational as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, to a certain extent, the current session would be a transitional year as AC and its four main sister committees begin working according to their new terms of reference.

### **Discussion**

- 5.5 Several members of AC sought clarification as to where, under the new committee structure, responsibility rested for setting fees and related matters such as the staff fee remission scheme. It was confirmed that Finance Committee would be responsible for making decisions on fees-related matters. Members expressed concern that there had not been any clear communication with faculties and departments about how fees-related matters would be managed under the new arrangements. Also, while the membership of Finance Committee included academic staff members, many issues relating to fees required academic input and it was not clear how this would be achieved in relation to discussions and decisions about fees. The Chair agreed that this was an important issue, given UCL's commitment to being an academic-led institution, and that consideration must be given to how this commitment would be operationalised in relation to fees and indeed other areas of UCL's activities.
- 5.6 It was suggested that AC's terms of reference should include a reference to knowledge transfer and exchange given the importance of this area, and that the constitution might be amended to include colleagues engaged in these activities. The AC Chair agreed that the AC officers would review this issue.

### **RESOLVED**

- 5.7 That the AC officers review the terms of reference and constitution of AC and consider whether they should encompass UCL's activities in knowledge transfer and exchange.

**[ACTION; Professor Michael Worton, Mr Jason Clarke]**

6 **UCL LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY**

[AC Min.66A, 2009-10]

**Noted**

- 6.1 At its meeting on 11 May 2010, AC endorsed the draft Manifesto for Teaching and draft UCL Learning and Teaching Strategy 2010-15. At its last meeting on 24 June 2010, AC noted that the Strategy had been revised in light of AC's discussion at its previous meeting and that an implementation plan was being drafted, with a view to the final Strategy and associated documents being disseminated in advance of the 2010-11 session.

**Received**

- 6.2 An oral report by the AC Chair.

**Reported**

- 6.3 A key aim of the revised ILTS was to ensure that UCL is as highly regarded around the world for the excellence of its teaching as it is for the excellence of its research. To this end, UCL was committed to developing new and innovative forms of teaching, new types of programme and different modes of programme delivery. A number of task forces would be established to develop ideas, for example, in distance learning and in innovations in teaching practice. A proposal would be submitted to the Provost's SMT for the establishment of a new UCL Teaching Fund. Invitations would be sent out in due course to various colleagues, including some members of AC, to serve on the teaching task forces.

7 **ANNUAL MONITORING – REPORT FROM THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE**

[AC Min.72, 2009-10]

**Noted**

- 7.1 At its meeting on 24 June 2010, 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**

- 7.2 At APPENDIX AC 1/03 (10-11) – the evaluation report from QMEC on the 2009-10 AM and AugAM round.
- 7.3 An oral report from Professor Mike Ewing, Chair of QMEC.

**Reported**

- 7.4 In his oral report, the Chair of QMEC highlighted a number of points contained in the Committee's evaluation report, including:
- As in previous years, a number of faculty summary reports had highlighted issues relating to the quality of UCL's estate, particularly lecture theatres and other teaching spaces - although not all the reports seemed to make the connection between increasing student numbers and growing pressure on UCL's estate.

- Two faculty summaries had noted concerns about the administration of PBIS, but this did not appear to have had an overall adverse effect on student recruitment.
- The Common Timetable seemed to be working well and this had not been highlighted by faculties as a problem.
- Several summaries noted that External Examiners' reports had highlighted the issue of slow feedback to students, especially delays in the return of marked coursework. This problem should be addressed by the implementation of the service standards approved by AC for provision of feedback. The faculty summaries for 2010-11 would be scrutinised to see whether this had led to an improvement in the situation.
- In tandem with the AM and AugAM round, faculties had been asked to comment on the issues which had been raised by UCL Union in the SWS that it had prepared for the 2009 QAA Institutional Audit. QMEC was satisfied that faculties were taking appropriate action in response to the SWS and this had been endorsed by the UCL Union's Education and Welfare Officer.
- In terms of the AM process, a criticism that had been made by faculties and departments was that the elongated AM timetable was unhelpful and did not facilitate prompt reporting and follow-up action and did not encourage full engagement with the process. The MAPS faculty was piloting the use of an accelerated timetable for AM and QMEC would be considering the outcomes of the pilot at its Spring Term meeting.

### **RESOLVED**

- 7.5 That AC approve the evaluation report from QMEC on the 2009-10 AM and AugAM round at APPENDIX AC 1/03 (10-11).

**[ACTION: Professor Mike Ewing, Ms Sandra Hinton – to note]**

## **8 UCL ESTATE AND STUDENT NUMBER PLANNING**

*[Mr Alec Gray, Estates and Facilities Division, attended for this item]*

### **Reported**

- 8.1 The AC Chair reported that he had received a letter from the SLMS Education Board concerning problems which staff within the FLS had experienced with UCL's estates which, the Board argued, were due to the system for allocating rooms and the lack of adequate advance planning for student numbers. The Board recommended a number of possible solutions to address this problem. A copy of the letter was tabled at the meeting at APPENDIX AC 1/06 (10-11).

### **Discussion**

- 8.2 The Academic Registrar noted that it would be possible to bring forward the deadline for returning students to complete online module registration, but this would shorten the time in which they have to complete this task. There was a need to balance the needs of students with those of the institution. Also, requiring students to make module choices earlier would increase the chance of subsequent

changes being requested which would require interventions at various points. However, this issue was currently being reviewed.

- 8.3 Mr Gray noted that earlier student registration would also enable rooms to be allocated earlier.
- 8.4 On the issue of student numbers, it was noted that the overshoot this year on undergraduate numbers had been due to a greater number of offers being made in order to achieve recruitment targets and better performance by students in meeting the offer requirements, leading to a higher conversion rate.
- 8.5 AC agreed that the letter from the SLMS Education Board had provided further evidence of the need to ensure that the issue of effective student number planning is addressed as a priority given the implications for UCL's estates and infrastructure and the student experience. Furthermore, it was essential that planning for student numbers was integrated with planning for the future configuration of the UCL estate.

## 9 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

### *Received*

- 9.1 An oral report from the AC Chair on the following matters.

## 9A Independent Inquiry Panel (Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab)

### *Reported*

- 9A.1 Earlier that month, Council had responded to the report of the Independent Inquiry Panel, chaired by Dame Fiona Caldicott, into Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's time at UCL. The report had concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that either Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab had been radicalised while a student at UCL or that conditions at UCL during that time or subsequently were conducive to the radicalisation of students. However, the report had also included a number of recommendations that UCL should review its processes in order to ensure that it was following good practice, e.g., the UCL Union's processes for monitoring invitations to visiting speakers. The revised personal tutoring scheme would also be important in ensuring regular contact between personal tutors and students, and enhanced training would be provided for staff to enable them to deal with situations which might cause them concern. The case also raised broader issues about UCL's secular tradition and the operation of freedom of speech on university campuses. In this context, it was important to note the UUK review into freedom of speech on campuses, being chaired by the Provost.

## 9B Qatar

### *Reported*

- 9B.1 UCL was due to sign an agreement the following week with the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community and the Qatar Museums Authority for the establishment of a UCL campus in Doha. The campus would focus on the delivery of postgraduate education and training in archaeology, cultural heritage and museum studies.



9C **Engagement Agreement**

*Reported*

9C.1 UCL's Engagement Agreement, under the PBIS, had been reviewed.

10 **ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHAIR ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE**

10A **Reform of Academic Committee and its Substructure**

*Noted*

10A.1 Following consultation with members of AC over the summer, on 27 September 2010, the AC Chair, acting on behalf of the Committee, took action to approve (i) revised terms of reference for AC, JSSC and QMEC and (ii) proposed terms of reference and constitutions for EdCom and RDC.

10B **UCL Annual Report to the University of London**

*Noted*

10B.1 On 30 September 2010, the Chair of AC, acting on behalf of the Committee, took action to approve UCL's annual report to the University of London for session 2008-09. (For the sake of economy, the report was not circulated with the papers for the meeting, but copies are available on request from the AC Secretary<sup>2</sup>.)

11 **ANNUAL REPORT TO ACADEMIC COMMITTEE FROM THE AUSTRALIA PROJECT BOARD**

*Received*

11.1 For information, at APPENDIX AC 1/04 (10-11) – the annual report to AC from the Australia Project Board.

12 **FACULTY TEACHING COMMITTEES**

*Received*

12.1 At APPENDIX AC 1/05 (10-11) - 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 24 June 2010.

13 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

*Noted*

13.1 The next meeting of AC would take place on **Thursday 16 December 2010 at 9.00am** in the **Garden Room**<sup>3</sup>.

JDC  
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<sup>2</sup> Email [jason.clarke@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:jason.clarke@ucl.ac.uk)

<sup>3</sup> The meeting was subsequently cancelled due to lack of urgent business. The next meeting of AC will therefore take place on Thursday 24 March 2011 at 9am in the Haldane Room.