



## ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Thursday 22 March 2012

### MINUTES

*PRESENT:*

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Provost and President	Dr Christine Hoffmann
Mr David Ashton	Dr Arne Hofmann
Dr Paul Ayris	Professor Nikos Konstantinidis
Professor David Bogle	Ms Helen Matthews
Professor Robert Brown	Mr Tim Perry
Ms Sue Bryant	Dr Hilary Richards
Dr Helen Chatterjee	Ms Mary Rimington
Mr Neil Chowdhury	Dr Ruth Siddall
Dr Brenda Cross	Ms Olga Thomas
Dr Caroline Essex	Ms Susan Ware
Professor Mike Ewing	Professor Michael Worton
Mr Marco Federighi	Professor Henry Woudhuysen
Professor David Green	

In attendance: Mr Jason Clarke (Secretary); Ms Clare Goudy; Mr Rex Knight;  
Ms Harriet Lilley; Ms Bella Malins [*for Minutes 32-34 only*]

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Bob Barber, Professor Steve Caddick,  
Professor Raymond MacAllister and Professor David Price.

*Key to abbreviations:*

AC	Academic Committee
EdCom	Education Committee
HE	Higher education
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
JSSC	Joint Staff Student Committee
LSE	London School of Economics
GPA	Grade Point Average
QMEC	Quality Management and Enhancement Committee
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
ROASG	Recruitment, Outreach and Admissions Steering Group
SMT	Provost's Senior Management Team

#### 28 MEMBERSHIP OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE IN SESSION 2011-12

***Noted***

- 28.1 Ms Helen Matthews, Academic Administrator for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences, had joined AC as a co-opted member with immediate effect.

29 **MINUTES**

**Approved**

29.1 The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 15 December 2011 [AC Mins. 11-27, 2011-12] were confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

30 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

*[See also Minutes 33 and 35 below]*

30A **Semesterisation**

*[AC Min.14, 2011-12]*

**Noted**

30A.1 At its meeting on 15 December 2011, AC considered a draft position paper from the (Acting) Vice-Provost (Education)/Chair of AC on semesterisation. It was agreed that the paper would be amended in light of the Committee's discussion and that the revised paper would then be submitted to the Provost for his consideration.

**Reported**

30A.2 Professor Ewing reported that the paper had been modified in light of the discussion at AC's previous meeting. A number of outstanding issues needed to be addressed in the paper (eg how to deal with the issue of the Easter break) and once this had been done the revised paper would be submitted to the Provost.

30B **Development of a 'Policy Zone'**

*[AC Min.16, 2011-12]*

**Noted**

30B.1 At its meeting on 15 December 2011, in the context of discussing a report from QMEC on progress in implementing the post-Institutional Audit Action Plan, AC discussed the issue of developing a 'Policy Zone' on the UCL website. This work was being taken forward by the AC Secretary and the Head of Web and Mobile Services, and it was hoped that a substantive report would go to the next meeting of AC.

31 **UCL INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY**

**Noted**

31.1 The UCL International Strategy was in the process of being revised and updated. The Vice-Provost (International) had given a presentation to AB at its meeting on 29 February 2012 on the major themes to be addressed in the new Strategy. The revised Strategy, which was being submitted to AC for its consideration, would be amended as appropriate in light of the discussion at both the AB and AC meetings. It was envisaged that the Provost, as Chair of AB, would then be invited to endorse formally the revised Strategy on behalf of AB before its submission to Council for final approval at its meeting on 4 April 2012.

**Received**

- 31.2 At APPENDIX AC 3/19 (11-12) – the revised UCL International Strategy, plus two supporting papers: (i) a note on revised governance and reporting arrangements for UCL’s international activities and (ii) a note on governing principles for UCL’s involvement in overseas campuses and partnerships.
- 31.3 An oral report by Professor Michael Worton, Vice-Provost (International).

**Reported**

- 31.4 Professor Worton drew attention to the following in his oral report:
- The revised International Strategy, which built on the foundations laid down in the original Strategy, set out an ambitious vision for UCL’s future international operations, which was driven by two key strategic drivers: (i) the need to adopt a proactive approach in furthering UCL’s mission as London’s global university and contributing to global education, and (ii) being responsive to external forces, developments and opportunities such as changes in UK immigration policy.
  - The revised Strategy should show UCL’s commitment to capacity building, equality and social cohesion.
  - UCL should establish, and be the hub of, a network of global universities, as well as be embedded in strategic global partnerships.
  - Of the Strategy’s six key aims, the fourth aim regarding international partnerships and collaborations was likely to stimulate the most discussion.

**Discussion**

- 31.5 The Provost noted that the revised Strategy would represent the second phase in the evolution of UCL’s international activities which had been led so successfully by Professor Worton. As such, there was now an opportunity to ask some strategic questions about the future nature and scope of UCL’s international activities, as well as issues of operational detail. In particular, he invited the Committee to give some thought to the possible risks associated with overseas campuses and overseas collaborations, especially in light of the issues experienced by the London School of Economics and its links with Libya. In order to assure UCL Council that international collaborations operate within the institutional framework of the Council White Paper 2011-21, the Provost requested that more be made of UCL’s ethical responsibilities in the Strategy. The Provost also requested that a frank analysis of how UCL should manage future collaborations in specific countries which might be seen as important strategic partners for UCL or the UK generally but which might raise ethical concerns, should be submitted to Council, whilst emphasising the positive results from overseas collaborations.
- 31.6 Members of AC discussed the risks involved with collaborating with overseas partners:
- Some countries which do not have Western-style, liberal-democratic political systems were nevertheless important markets for HE and more generally, and could not be ignored. However, there were several categories of risk in collaborating with countries which may be seen by some as having dubious ethical

standards – (i) risk by association; (ii) reputational risk; (iii) risk as experienced by LSE relating to corruption and funding. UCL could shield itself from such risks by ensuring that robust policies and procedures were in place. Also, engaging with such countries provided an opportunity to open a dialogue on political and civic development.

- Offering dual degrees with overseas institutions would safeguard UCL's standards, as well as show overseas institutions how UCL operates its teaching, research and administration in an ethical manner.
- UCL would need to ensure that any companies or institutions with which it is considering collaborating which in turn have overseas partners or operations meet UCL's ethical standards at home and abroad, and that detailed due diligence takes place on all prospective partners.
- Any collaboration needed to be balanced against the positive transfer of knowledge and the negative ethical risks. Judgements should be on a case-by-case basis.

31.7 The Vice-Provost (Operations) suggested that some of the information on governance structures and reporting arrangements be incorporated into the Strategy itself to emphasise the governance and accountability structures which are in place covering UCL's overseas operations.

31.8 AC supported a request from the Medical and Postgraduate Students Officer that the UCL Union's International Officer should be a member of the proposed International Strategy Board to ensure that the student body can contribute directly to UCL's overseas activities.

31.9 The Director of Library Services drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 68 of the International Strategy which referred to the use of e-learning technologies and noted that providers of such technologies did not always view UCL's overseas campuses, in licensing terms, as part of UCL, which would impact on access to e-provisions overseas. JISC was looking to establish a new dialogue with providers regarding licensing overseas.

31.10 Representatives from the Faculty of Engineering Sciences noted that the Faculty had postgraduate links with Stanford and Columbia universities and that the International Strategy would enable the Faculty to pursue long-term projects with them.

31.11 In response to comments made by members of AC regarding the existence of overseas relationships at various levels of UCL, the Vice-Provost (International) noted that any links with overseas partners/institutions *etc*, must be notified to the Office for International Affairs to ensure that UCL was not at risk from unknown links/partnerships (which had been an issue at LSE), and to protect UCL from unnecessary tax liabilities.

31.12 Following discussion of the International Strategy, members of AC agreed that the Strategy should be endorsed, in principle, by the Committee.

### **RESOLVED**

31.13 That AC endorse the draft revised International Strategy, subject to the format of the Strategy being amended as suggested by the Committee.

**[ACTION: Professor Michael Worton – to note]**

- 31.14 That the UCL Union's Medical and Postgraduate Students' Officer be included in the constitution of the proposed International Strategy Board.

**[ACTION: Professor Michael Worton – to note]**

32 **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND THE UCL ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

[AC Min.56, 2007-08]

**Noted**

- 32.1 In December 2007, AC approved a modern foreign language requirement for undergraduate admissions to take effect from the 2012 entry. Following a recent discussion at the Provost's SMT, the Vice-Provost (Education)/Chair of AC and the Dean of Students (Academic)/Chair of EdCom, together with relevant officers, had reviewed the introduction of the MFL requirement.

**Received**

- 32.2 At APPENDIX AC 3/20 (11-12) – a note arising from the above review. (The note was also received by EdCom at its meeting on 14 March 2012.)
- 32.3 An oral report by Professor Anthony Smith, Vice-Provost (Education)/Chair of AC.

**Reported**

- 32.4 Discussions regarding the implementation of the MFL requirement which had taken place at the Provost's SMT, at faculty level and at EdCom had revealed concerns about the way in which the requirement had been implemented and communicated to prospective students and schools, and its implications for UCL's widening participation agenda. The AC Chair drew the Committee's attention to the five recommendations at section 15 of the note at APPENDIX AC 3/20 (11-12).
- 32.5 The Head of Outreach and Admissions reported that the way that the requirement had been implemented had caused some confusion among potential students and their advisers. However, prospective students who had been offered a place at UCL but who did not meet the MFL requirement had been flagged and had informed that they could take language modules when at UCL.

**Discussion**

- 32.6 Members of AC noted the following in particular in their discussion of the MFL requirement:
- Following the Government's decision to make it optional for GCSE students to take an MFL, AC had approved the MFL requirement in 2007 partly in order to empower schools to push for the inclusion of an MFL GCSE as part of the school curriculum. If UCL were to retreat from the requirement, this would weaken the leverage that schools would be able to exert in this area. It would also send out a negative message about UCL's commitment to the study of languages.
  - Some members of AC commented that, whilst they supported the principle of the MFL requirement, it had deterred some very able students from applying to UCL, who at the age of 14 had not

thought about the impact of not taking an MFL at GCSE on their future university choices.

- It was argued that it was not the policy that was problematic, but that it had not been communicated sufficiently clearly to schools so that students, when selecting their GCSE options, could be advised accordingly as to the impact of their GCSE choices, not only for university entrance but also for employability.
- UCL's mission as London's Global University and its commitment to internationalism, as shown by the International Strategy, should be mirrored its commitment to the MFL requirement.
- UCL's MFL requirement should not impinge on UCL's widening participation responsibilities.
- It was suggested that the MFL requirement should be stated in terms of an on-course or progression requirement rather than an admissions requirement; this view had been widely supported at EdCom.
- Concern was expressed about how the requirement would be applied to academically gifted students who had difficulty with language-based subjects, especially those with dyslexia.

32.7 Following a lengthy discussion, AC agreed to approve the five recommendations set out at paragraph 15 of the note at APPENDIX AC 3/20 (11-12), which were as follows:

- That the strategic and educational rationale for introducing the MFL requirement remains valid and that AC should reaffirm its commitment to the policy which it approved in 2007. Further research should, if feasible, be undertaken into the possible impact of the MFL requirement on students from different school and socio-economic backgrounds.*
- Clear statements should be provided to prospective students, their parents and schools, as well as admissions tutors, on the full scope of the MFL requirement and the four ways in which it can be met. Clear and full notes of guidance should be provided setting out those qualifications and languages which are eligible under the policy.*
- A protocol for the Dean of Students (Academic) to assess proficiency in heritage or community languages where accreditation is not available should be developed and included in the notes of guidance.*
- AC should endorse the proposal from the SMT that responsibility for receiving and deciding upon requests from departments for students to be exempted from the MFL requirement should be devolved to Faculty Tutors. However, as the policy states, this should be granted in exceptional cases only.*
- The policy and its implementation should be reviewed in 2013-14 as originally agreed by AC, taking note of any relevant external developments and the position of other members of the Russell Group.*

AC agreed that relevant officers should liaise to implement the above recommendations.

**RESOLVED**

32.8 That AC approve the report on MFLs and the admissions process at APPENDIX AC 3/20 (11-12) and the recommendations contained therein.

**[ACTION: Members of AC – to note]**

32.9 That the Director of Registry and Academic Services and the Head of Outreach and Admissions liaise with other relevant officers to implement the above recommendations.

**[ACTION: Mr Tim Perry, Ms Bella Malins – with relevant officers]**

33 **ACADEMIC COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP ON THE GRADE POINT AVERAGE**

*[AC Min.13A, 2011-12]*

**Received**

33.1 At APPENDIX AC 3/21 (11-12) – the preliminary report from the Working Group on GPA.

33.2 An oral report from Professor Mike Ewing, as Chair of the Working Group.

**Reported**

33.3 The analysis provided in the preliminary report sought to demonstrate comparisons using the GPA system between past results in three different subject areas: Engineering (Faculty-wide results), History, and Mathematics.

33.4 The initial analysis indicated a contrast between subject areas and that adopting a GPA system would make a difference to final marks across disciplines. However, more modelling was required and this would be undertaken in order to inform the Working Group's final report, which would be submitted to AC at its July meeting.

**RESOLVED**

33.5 That AC welcome the preliminary report from the Working Group on GPA at APPENDIX AC 3/21 (11-12)

**[ACTION: Professor Mike Ewing, Mr Rob Traynor – to note]**

34 **GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSION OF STUDENTS**

**Received**

34.1 At APPENDIX AC 3/22 (11-12) – a note from the Director of Registry and Academic Services on the above.

34.2 An oral report by Mr Tim Perry, Director of Registry and Academic Services.

**Reported**

- 34.3 The note at APPENDIX AC 3/22 (11-12) summarised changes in the last two years in UCL's governance structures relating to the recruitment and admission of students and highlighted the need - partly in response to issues raised by the Woolf Inquiry into the LSE's links with Libya - to clarify the locus of responsibility for the approval of policy in these areas. It recommended, therefore, that this be made explicit in the terms of reference of EdCom and RDC.
- 34.4 As the note explained, the Recruitment, Outreach and Admissions Steering Group should be seen as replacing the 'lead officer' arrangement which it had originally been envisaged would replace the (now disestablished) Committee for the Recruitment and Admission of Students, but which was judged inappropriate as there was no longer a single officer who could undertake that role.

**Discussion**

- 34.5 In response to a question from a member of AC, it was confirmed that whilst ROASG reported to the Dean of Students (Academic) and the Vice-Provost (Operations), policy proposals from ROASG would in future be submitted to EdCom or RDC for approval as appropriate.

**RESOLVED**

- 34.6 That AC approve the note on governance structures for the recruitment and admission of students at APPENDIX AC 3/22 (11-12)

**[ACTION: Mr Tim Perry – to note]**

- 34.7 That AC endorse the proposal in the above note that the terms of reference of EdCom and RDC be amended to reflect their responsibilities in relation to the approval of policy in relation to the recruitment and admission of, respectively, taught and postgraduate-research students.

**[ACTION: Professor Mike Ewing and Ms Sandra Hinton – for EdCom]**

**[ACTION: Professor David Bogle and Mr Gary Hawes – for RDC]**

- 34.8 That the relevant officers review the constitutions of EdCom and RDC in light of this additional responsibility.

**[ACTION: Professor Mike Ewing and Ms Sandra Hinton – for EdCom]**

**[ACTION: Professor David Bogle and Mr Gary Hawes – for RDC]**

35 **INTERVIEWS: DEFINITION AND POLICY**

*[AC Min.23, 2011-12]*

**Noted**

- 35.1 At its meeting on 15 December 2011, AC received a proposed definition of, and policy for, interviews which had been prepared by the Admissions Structures and Selection Processes Steering Group.



- 35.2 The document had been updated by the Steering Group in light of comments received from members of AC and EdCom, and was now being submitted to AC for approval.

**Received**

- 35.3 At APPENDIX AC 3/23 (11-12) – the revised document on interviews.

**Discussion**

- 35.4 Members of AC requested clarification on the length of time that departments should retain interview notes. It was agreed that the Steering Group would give guidance on that point.

**RESOLVED**

- 35.5 That AC approve the revised definition of, and policy for, interviews at APPENDIX AC 3/23 (11-12)

**[ACTION: Mr Lyndon Mckevitt – to note]**

36 **STUDENT FEEDBACK DATA OVERVIEW REPORT**

**Noted**

- 36.1 At its meeting on 23 February 2012, JSSC received the fourth Student Data Overview Report. The Report provides an overview and analysis of student feedback data from a number of internal and external sources.

**Received**

- 36.2 At APPENDIX AC 3/24 (11-12) – the Student Data Overview Report.

- 36.3 An oral report from Dr Ruth Sidall, Chair of JSSC.

**Reported**

- 36.4 The JSSC Chair reported that there were four key points of student dissatisfaction arising from the student feedback data:

- Learning resources;
- Assessment and feedback;
- Timetabling;
- Academic support.

Details about how the issues were being addressed were at Table 2 of the report at APPENDIX AC 3/24 (11-12). Although students had expressed some dissatisfaction with aspects of UCL's learning infrastructure, they appeared to be happy with the quality of the teaching that they received.

**Discussion**

- 36.5 The Medical and Postgraduate Students Officer noted that students placed great importance on IT access and class sizes, and there were still problems in these areas which needed to be addressed.

- 36.6 The Director of Library Services thanked JSSC officers for the report and noted that student access to core texts was a problem as it was

not physically possible to house hard-copies of core texts in UCL libraries. However, digital copies of texts could be made available and departments should provide Library Services with their core-texts lists so that digital copies could be provided to students.

- 36.7 The AC Chair noted that the Common Timetable and the Personal Tutor system were both on his agenda for the coming months. Also, given some of the findings from the Student Barometer and International Student Barometer surveys, the AC Chair proposed that a presentation be made to AC at its May or July meeting on key issues for UCL.

**RESOLVED**

- 36.8 That AC approve the fourth Student Data Overview Report at APPENDIX AC 3/24 (11-12).

**[ACTION: Dr Ruth Siddall, Mr Rob Traynor – to note]**

- 36.9 That the AC officers arrange for a presentation on the outcomes of the International Student Barometer and Student Barometer surveys be made to AC at either its May or July 2012 meeting.

**[ACTION: Mr Jason Clarke]**

37 **ANNUAL MONITORING**

**Noted**

- 37.1 At its meeting on 13 March 2012, QMEC received and considered faculty summaries on this year's Annual Monitoring and Augmented Annual Monitoring cycle. Although QMEC would be submitting a full evaluation report to AC at its next meeting, the Chair of QMEC would make an interim oral report to AC on key issues emerging from this year's cycle, which had operated according to the new accelerated timetable.

**Received**

- 37.2 An oral report from Professor Mike Ewing, as Chair of QMEC, on key issues arising from this session's AM and AugAM cycle.

**Reported**

- 37.3 In his oral report, Professor Ewing noted the following points in particular:
- The accelerated timetable for Annual Monitoring had worked well and had given departments the opportunity to comment on issues in session.
  - Faculty Tutors would be meeting Dr Paul Greening from the Department of Civil, Environmental and Geomatic Engineering to discuss and share how PoT has been successfully managed in the Department.
  - The Faculty of Laws has not provided its Annual Monitoring Report. The Faculty of Law was requested to provide its report before QMEC submitted its written evaluation report on Annual Monitoring to the next meeting of AC.

**RESOLVED**

- 37.4 That the Faculty of Laws submit its Annual Monitoring summary report to the QMEC officers as soon as possible.

**[ACTION: Ms Olga Thomas]**

**38 DEPARTMENTAL LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGIES**

**Noted**

- 38.1 Academic departments had been requested to submit updated DLTs to the Office of the Vice-Provost (Education). These would be reviewed by a panel with a view to identifying areas for future investment, emerging activities *etc.* A report on the preliminary review of the revised DLTs would be submitted to AC at its next meeting.

**39 REPORTS OF SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS ETC OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**

**Noted**

- 39.1 The AC officers had received on behalf of AC, since the last meeting of AC, Minutes of the following:

- Education Committee - 8 December 2011;
- Library Committee - 7 November 2011;
- Joint Staff Student Committee - 24 November 2011;
- Research Governance Committee - 14 November 2011 and 9 February 2012.

**40 FACULTY TEACHING COMMITTEES**

**Received**

- 40.1 At APPENDIX AC 3/25 (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 15 December 2011.

**41 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Noted**

- 41.1 The next meeting of AC would take place on **Thursday 10 May 2012** at **9.00am** in the **Haldane Room**.