



## Academic Committee

Thursday 27 February 2020 at 10:00am

### Minutes

#### Present members:

President and Provost (Chair); Dr Paul Ayris; Dr Simon Banks; Professor David Bogle; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Dr Celia Caulcott; Mr Ashley Doolan; Professor Piet Eeckhout; Dr Julie Evans; Dr Hugh Goodacre; Dr Arne Hofmann; Dr Sandra Leaton-Gray; Professor Christoph Lindner [for Minutes 20-24]; Ms Aatikah Malik; Dr Helen Matthews; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Hynek Pikhart; Professor David Price; Professor Sasha Roseneil; Mr Mike Rowson; Professor David Shanks; Ms Ashley Slanina-Davies; Professor Anthony Smith; Dr Hazel Smith; Ms Olga Thomas; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson; Professor Li Wei; Professor Andrew Wills

#### Attendees:

Dr Richard Allen, Office for the Vice-Provost (Research) [for Minute 24]  
Ms Annabel Brown, Academic Administration Officer, Bartlett Faculty Office  
Dr Clare Goudy, Chief of Staff, Provost's Office  
Mr Andrew Gray, Library Services [for Minute 24]  
Ms Bella Malins, Director of Access and Admissions, Student and Registry Services  
Dr Aeli Roberts, Senior Tutor, Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment  
Mr Ewart Woolridge CBE, Consulting Fellow, Halpin Partnership

#### Apologies:

Ms Wendy Appleby  
Dame Nicola Brewer  
Dr Simon Cane  
Professor Mark Emberton  
Professor Graham Hart  
Professor David Lomas  
Professor Geraint Rees  
Professor Sue Rogers  
Dr Ruth Siddall  
Dr Sam Smidt  
Professor Alan Thompson  
Dr Stan Zochowski

#### Officer:

Ms Rachel Port

## Part I: Preliminary Business

### 20. Minutes

- 20.1. AC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2019 [Minutes 1-19, 2019-20].

### 21. Matters Arising

- 21.1. There were no matters arising.

## Part II: Items for Discussion

### 22. Provost's Business

- 22.1. The Chair reported the following items to AC:

#### **Appointment of new Provost**

- a. Dr Michael Spence, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of Sydney, had been appointed as the new President and Provost of UCL with effect from January 2021. The Chair had agreed to remain in post until the end of January 2021 to allow for a transition period with his successor.

#### **Industrial action**

- b. Industrial action was planned to take place on 14 days in February and March and UCL would continue to support its students as much as possible. The Learning Support Fund would be extended and the amounts offered to students to support their learning in light of the action would be increased. The fund was taken up by some 4k students after the industrial action last Autumn and the amounts offered would be increased to £400-£500 per student. It was noted that an impasse had currently been reached in negotiations between the UCU and employers.

#### **Commission of Inquiry**

- c. The Inquiry made its first report to Academic Board (AB) at its meeting held on 12 February 2020, with a request for comments on its factual accuracy. It was intended that AB would convene a special meeting, or at another AB meeting, to vote on aspects of its recommendations. One of the proposals was that AC be abolished and its functions be taken on by AB.. However, in constitutional terms, AC was in fact a committee of Council, not AB, and AB could not take on AC's delegated powers as proposed as that would ultimately be for Council to determine. The Chair had offered to share the legal advice on this aspect of the inquiry's recommendations with the Commission.

### **European Research Collaboration**

- d. No decision had been announced about international research collaboration funding and there was only 6 months left on the Horizon 2020 funding scheme. It was noted that having third country status did not give researchers and institutions access to all funding streams in the EU. The Russell Group would continue to bring this issue to the government's attention.

### **Coronavirus**

- e. There were currently no cases of Covid-19 at UCL and only 9 cases had been recorded in the UK. However, this situation could change rapidly as in Northern Italy. If UCL was to have any staff or students cases, Public Health England could ask UCL to closedown immediately. In light of this, a group had been set up that was co-chaired by the Chief Operating Officer and the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) to consider the implications of that situation. The Chair was saddened to report that some Chinese students had faced abuse in light of the virus outbreak but that appeared to have stopped.

### **Town Hall Meeting**

- f. A Town Hall meeting would be held tomorrow evening on the UCL Eugenics Inquiry and it would cover the release of its associated report.

22.2. The following points were made in discussion:

- a. Work was being undertaken at UCL to develop a framework for Teaching Fellows that would be considered by AC at a future meeting.
- b. The Learning Opportunities Fund was empty at present. It was intended that any monies from those members' salaries participating in planned industrial action would be placed in the Student Hardship Fund and any leftover monies would be used for student mental health activities.

## **23. Report from the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs)**

23.1. The Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) (VPESA) gave an oral update on education and student matters since the last AC meeting. The key points made were:

- a. The second wave of the Learning Opportunities Fund would be launched once the current period of industrial action had finished. The sums of monies to be awarded to students would be more generous than previously as the strike was planned to last for a longer period.
- b. The industrial action had created anxiety amongst students about the upcoming examination period. A sub-group of Education Committee had been set up to look at the timetable for examinations to determine the

latest date that they could be held, but the timing for getting papers to the printers and returned would need to be factored in.

- c. It was hoped that work led by Professor Eleanor Robson, Head of History, around the workload allocation for Teaching Fellows would complete early next term.
- d. A larger group had been set up to look at a range of scenarios if UCL had to closedown in light of Covid-19. Issues under consideration included: advice for students going home at Easter; how to support teaching and learning activities for the remainder of the academic session; English language tests for overseas students given the testing centres were now closed in China; running UCL's Summer School, and student enrolment. It was noted that Chinese and Australian universities had placed teaching and assessment information online and staff were working remotely.

23.2. The following points were made in discussion:

- a. In relation to the making any changes to UCL's Regulations for Examinations, work was already being undertaken by the Director of Academic Services and the Examinations Manager and any changes could be approved via Chair's action.
- b. In response to a query about whether UCL was keeping a record of any students who might be self-isolating, it was considered that Faculty Tutors would need to take responsibility for that.
- c. The Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities had asked the Departmental Managers in the School of European Languages, Culture and Society to contact staff and students abroad, while UCL's Study Abroad Team had contacted individuals in Northern Italy given the rapidly changing situation there.
- d. UCL was in liaison with JISC about the Janet Network and connecting from outside. If UCL was to move to working remotely, it, along with other institutions, would need to ensure the Network could cope.
- e. It was noted that Hawkridge House hall of residence had been closed down and had caused disruption to those student residents.

## **24. UCL Bibliometrics Policy (Paper 2-14)**

24.1. The Pro-Vice-Provost (Library Services) introduced the proposed policy that set out a framework for the responsible use of publication and citation metrics at UCL. The key points made were:

- a. The policy followed a two year development process and a cross-UCL consultation process reaching over 200 academics.
- b. The policy set out a framework and landscape for the responsible evaluation of metrics in light of UCL's signing of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment in 2015.

- c. The Declaration's basic concept was that it was preferable to read a paper rather than to use a bibliometric approximation such as journal impact factors to assess its academic quality. This was aligned to the Research Excellence Framework whereby impact factors could not be used to assess outputs.
- d. The responsible use of metrics and impact factors was included in guidance for the recruitment of new researchers and the academic promotions framework at UCL.
- e. The development of such institutional policies were increasingly supported or mandated by research funders in the UK such as the Wellcome Trust who were also adopting the same approach in awarding funding to researchers. Moreover, China had just issued a national policy adopting a position similar to UCL's about the responsible use of metrics.
- f. There had been widespread consultation across UCL over the past three years that reached a good level of engagement. In summer 2019 a survey of UCL academic staff was undertaken and it gave broadly positive feedback with some 75% of respondents in favour of the individual points of the policy.
- g. It was noted that no metric or set of metrics could be universally applied across the institution. It was intended that guidance material would be produced with more detailed discussion and examples of how the principles contained in the policy could be applied in the respective area. The Pro-Vice-Provost was keen to work with faculties and departments to facilitate its implementation.
- h. Subject to AC approval, the policy would be published as an Open Access document on the UCL website. It would be shared with the European Commission who wished to advertise it as a European policy. Work would also be undertaken with both Human Resources and Organisational Development to ensure all relevant UCL staff policies aligned with this new policy.

24.2. The following points were made in discussion:

- a. AC commended the proposed policy and considered that its more enlightened approach to publication and citation metrics was more inclusive.
- b. It was considered that in some areas at UCL, such as Economics, it could be difficult to implement the responsible use of bibliometrics and that guidance from the Pro-Vice-Provost would be especially required.
- c. It was considered that the policy would be especially beneficial to Early Career Researchers and Teaching Fellows in order to give recognition to their work as not all those staff would aspire to a professorial academic career.
- d. In relation to a query about PhD students having a profile on the Institutional Research Information Service (IRIS), work was underway with Information Services Division (ISD) to extend it to PhD students and that it

would be rolled out across the Institute of Education before being made available to the whole UCL PhD community.

24.3. AC approved the proposed UCL Bibliometrics Policy.

**25. Lecturecast Update (Paper 2-15)**

25.1. Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson gave an oral update on the work of the *Lecturecast Everywhere* project and the Lecturecast Policy Working Group. The key points made were:

- a. Lecturecast was one of UCL's key digital platforms and the Chair was known to be keen for it to be installed as a baseline in all departments.
- b. The *Lecturecast Everywhere* project reported to the newly-created Digital Transformation Infrastructure Board.
- c. The Project was now in the Solution Delivery phase. The initial 167 rooms to be provisioned had been audited and reduced to 123, although this number would increase when departmentally-owned rooms used for teaching not logged on CMIS were taken into account.
- d. 60 boxes had been obtained from Echo and the first of the hardware installations took place this month.
- e. The Working Group had been developing UCL's policy for the use of Lecturecast and was considering whether to recommend an opt-out policy or to retain the current opt-in policy in the use of Lecturecast. It was intended however that no questions would be asked for those wishing to opt-out as some staff were known anecdotally to have concerns about being recorded.
- f. Professor Townsend-Nicholson had liaised with the Pro-Vice-Provost (Student Experience) about student attendance at Lecturecast and it was found that there could be lower student attendance at a single lecture rather than at raked lectures. However, UCL Chemistry had 100% compliance for using Lecturecast and had not encountered a reduction in attendance.
- g. A Town Hall meeting and email consultation was planned that would be undertaken to understand staff and student views on the institutional use of Lecturecast, to inform the draft policy that would be prepared by the Working Group this session. This was planned for February 2020 but was being readjusted due to the planned industrial action.

25.2. The Chair was keen for the Lecturecast project and policy to be completed ahead of his departure and expressed his thanks to Professor Townsend-Nicholson and colleagues for taking this work forward.

**26. Embedding Innovation and Enterprise in the governance of UCL (Paper 2-16)**

- 26.1. The Vice-Provost (Enterprise) introduced the report that set out the proposal to establish an Innovation and Enterprise Committee as a sub-committee of AC. The key points made were:
- a. It was noted that UCL's current governance arrangements did not include formal reporting of Innovation and Enterprise to Council. It was proposed that this be addressed by the formation of a standing Innovation and Enterprise Committee as a sub-committee of AC.
  - b. The drivers for this proposal included the imminent Knowledge Exchange Framework and associated Concordat, the need for clarity as to the status of innovation and enterprise as a core mission of UCL and the importance of ensuring academic oversight of this area.
  - c. The proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) and membership for the committee had been developed based on those for AC's sub-committees of Education Committee and Research Governance Committee. The proposal had been considered by the Provost's Senior Management Team (SMT) and the ToR had been strengthened in light of their suggestions.
- 26.2. The following points were made in discussion:
- a. In relation to the proposed membership at Faculty and School level, it was noted that the structures around knowledge exchange had been set up by the previous Vice-Provost (Enterprise) and might require review.
  - b. In terms of student representation, it was noted that there was both a part-time and full time officer that covered international matters and further discussion would need to take place with the Students' Union UCL to determine the appropriate student representative.
  - c. In terms of Early Career Researcher representation, it was envisaged that the UCL Doctoral School would cover that staff group on the committee.
  - d. In terms of an alternative name for the committee such as the Knowledge Exchange Committee, it was noted that Knowledge Exchange was used at government policy level and the terms innovation and enterprise were seen as excluding some elements of the university. AC considered that the name of the committee be kept to the Innovation and Enterprise Committee.
- 26.3. AC:
- a. Approved, with one member abstaining, the proposal to establish a new standing Innovation and Enterprise Committee as a sub-committee of AC.
  - b. Approved that necessary changes be made to AC's Terms of Reference and the UCL committees webpages.

**27. Prevent Update (Paper 2-17)**

- 27.1. The Students' Union members of AC left the room for the Prevent Update due to the Students' Union UCL's policy not to engage with the Prevent agenda.
- 27.2. The Director of Access and Admissions introduced the annual update on the implementation of Prevent at UCL. The key points made were:
- a. All HEIs had a duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The Office for Students (OfS) was responsible for monitoring HEIs compliance with this duty.
  - b. Since the last report to AC, the OfS had changed its monitoring regime and now undertook separate risk assessment to determine whether institutions would be subject to a Prevent Review Meeting (PRM). UCL was classified as high risk and its PRM took place in May 2019. Subsequently, the OfS confirmed that they considered UCL to be compliant with the duty. The outcome of this year's risk assessment was due in March 2020.
  - c. The OfS had not revealed why it considered UCL to be high risk, along with 3 other institutions in the UK. It was considered likely to be due to UCL's size, location and previous issues with external speakers. The identity of the other high risk institutions was unknown.
  - d. Further developments had been made to the outline training module which now included a feedback form. The module was now included in the new staff introductory suite of training.
  - e. 2850 events were logged as including external speakers in the 2019 annual return to OfS with 7 events being referred for senior management approval.
  - f. The Procedure was currently being reviewed to ensure the lines of authority and decision making remained appropriate and valid.
  - g. One reportable incident had been discussed with the OfS since the last report to AC and was quickly resolved to the OfS's satisfaction.
- 27.3. The Chair expressed his thanks to the Director of Access and Admissions and her colleagues for their all their work in connection with Prevent.

**28. Disclosure and Barring Service (Paper 2-18)**

- 28.1. The Director of Access and Admissions introduced the paper that outlined the introduction of an external umbrella body to administer the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all applicants and students and the associated running cost. The key points made were:
- a. Following an audit by the DBS at UCL in January 2019, a significant variation in the delivery of DBS checks was identified across the applicant and student body.



- b. As a longer term solution, UCL had recently undertaken a procurement process to appoint an umbrella body to carry out checks on applicants and students.
- c. An audit of programmes at UCL which required a DBS check for the programme or for an optional module was being undertaken. However, only a small number of programmes were anticipated to require a DBS check such as the MBBS and Teacher Training courses. However, other programmes would require checks for a particular module or project where students came into contact with vulnerable people.
- d. There had been inconsistency in provision in relation to the costs of carrying out DBS checks as it varied to date according to academic discipline and. Costs had either been borne by applicants, students or HR services. For example, UCL Division of Medicine covered the costs for DBS checks for its MBBS students while students enrolled on the Institute of Education (IoE)'s Teacher Training programmes had to cover the cost themselves.
- e. It was proposed that UCL moved to a consistent position of either the applicant paying for all related costs (option 1) or the academic department covering them (option 2), across all its programmes of study.

28.2. The following points were made in discussion:

- a. AC considered that consistency in approach was very important and unanimously supported option 2 whereby academic departments be charged for any checks carried out on their applicants/students going forward, rather than option 1 whereby applicants be required to pay for their own check from 2021 entry onwards.
- b. It was noted that in light of the number of Teacher Training applicants/students at UCL at some 1500-1700 each session that would require a DBS check at a total cost of around £50 each, the proposed approach would impact the IoE's resources by some £100k each session.
- c. In relation to a query about the current method of payment for DBS checks for staff already employed at UCL, this issue would be referred to Human Resources Policy Committee (HRPC) for discussion.

28.3. AC:

- a. Agreed that academic departments be charged for any DBS checks carried out on their applicants/students going forward.
- b. Proposed that the Provost liaise with the Interim Director of the IoE about the financial impact of it being charged for applicant/student DBS checks henceforward.
- c. Proposed that the method of payment for DBS checks for staff already employed at UCL be referred to HRPC for discussion.

### **Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information**

#### **29. Review of the Design of UCL Degree Certificates (Paper 2-19)**

- 29.1. AC approved the proposal to form a Task and Finish Group to undertake a review of the existing design of the UCL degree certificate, based on student feedback and in light of UCL gaining University Title status.

#### **30. Lead Officer report: Careers and Employability (Paper 2-20)**

- 30.1. AC received the Careers and Employability Lead Officer report 2018-19.

#### **31. Lead Officer report: Student Accommodation (Paper 2-21)**

- 31.1. AC received the Student Accommodation Lead Officer report 2018-19.

#### **32. Annual Report for session 2018-19 – Student Experience Committee (Paper 2-22)**

- 32.1. AC received the Student Experience Committee Annual Report 2018-19.

#### **33. Annual Report for session 2018-19 – Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee (Paper 2-23)**

- 33.1. AC received the Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee Annual Report 2018-19.

#### **34. Reports of sub-committees, working groups etc of AC**

- 34.1. AC received the following sets of minutes:
- a. The minutes of Education Committee, 10 October 2019; 3 December 2019 (unconfirmed);
  - b. The minutes of Library Committee, 4 November 2019;
  - c. The minutes of Research Degrees Committee, 5 November 2019 (unconfirmed);
  - d. The minutes of Research Governance Committee, 10 July 2019;
  - e. The minutes of Student Experience Committee, 19 November 2019 (unconfirmed);
  - f. The minutes of Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee, 25 June 2019; 9 December 2019 (unconfirmed).

#### **35. Date of Next Meeting**

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35.1. The next meeting of Academic Committee would take place on Thursday 18 June 2020 at 10:00am in the Haldane Room, Wilkins Building.

The meeting finished at 11.45am.

Ms Rachel Port, Secretary to Academic Committee  
April 2020