



Council

Wednesday 2nd September 2020, 9:00am

Video-conferencing meeting via Zoom

Minutes

Present Members:

Professor Michael Arthur; Mr Ayman Benmati; Mr Mintoo Bhandari; Mr Victor Chu CBE (Chair); Professor Lucie Clapp; Dr Alun Coker; Professor Annette Dolphin; Professor Patrick Haggard; Ms Lindsay Nicholson MBE; Mr Turlogh O'Brien CBE; Ms Caroline Paige; Professor Helen Roberts; Lord Sharkey; Mr Philip Sturrock MBE; Mr Justin Turner QC; Baroness Valentine; Ms Sarah Whitney.

Observers:

Dr Martin Fry
Professor Ralf Schoepfer

Attendees:

For Minutes 139 - 149: Dr Celia Caulcott, Vice-Provost (Enterprise)
For Minutes 137 - 149: Dr Clare Goudy, Chief of Staff, President and Provost
For Minutes 137 - 149: Professor Dame Hazel Genn, Vice-Provost (International and Advancement)
For Minutes 137 - 149: Mr Phil Harding, Director of Finance and Business Affairs
For Minutes 137 - 149: Professor David Price, Vice-Provost (Research)
For Minutes 137 - 149: Ms Fiona Ryland, Chief Operating Officer
For Minutes 137 - 149: Professor Anthony Smith, Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs)

Apologies:

Mr Dominic Blakemore
Dr Andrew Gould
Professor Hynek Pikhart
Professor David Lomas, Vice-Provost (Health)

Officer(s):

Ms Wendy Appleby, Secretary to Council
Ms Anne Marie O'Mullane, Assistant Secretary to Council
Ms Olivia Whiteley, Governance Officer

Part I: Preliminary Business

137. Welcome

137.1. Dr Martin Fry and Professor Ralf Schoepfer were welcomed as observers to the meeting. They would be joining Council on the 1st October 2020 as an elected professorial member of Council and elected non-professorial member of Council respectively.

138. Declaration of Interests

138.1. Ms Carol Paige, Students' Union UCL, Democracy, Operations and Community Officer, declared an interest in Item 10, UCL Students' Union Budget for 2020/21. Ms Paige was a member of the UCL Students' Union Trustee Board which approved the budget for recommendation to Council for approval.

139. Minutes of the last meeting (7-108)

139.1. Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2020 subject to the following changes being made:

- a. Minute 123.2 g: Include the following sentence at the end of the paragraph: When the item comes back to Council for approval, the options of insourcing and outsourcing should be set out in the paper.
- b. The attendance section should be updated with the exact details for Mr David Fettes.

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

140. Provost's Business

140.1. The Provost reported on key developments since the last meeting to Council

Research Funding

a. It had been the best year ever for new externally funded research with £523m awarded.

Performance in Rankings

b. UCL had fallen one place in the Shanghai Jiao Tong University from 16th to 17th position. UCL had also fallen one place in the Times Higher Education Ranking from 15th to 16th position. This was attributable to the formation of a new university due to the merger between Paris-Sorbonne and Pierre-and-Marie-Curie University into the Sorbonne University.

Covid-19 Predicting the future

- c. The Vice-Provost (Health) had written an excellent article for UCL staff news, Covid-19 Predicting the future. The article indicated that the world would have to learn to live with the virus in the medium term. The article would be shared with Council members.

Preparations for new academic year

- d. There had been a fantastic effort from everyone at UCL to prepare for the new academic year. UCL had communicated with students that safety was UCL's priority and that opportunities on campus would be significantly reduced. There would only be one to two hours of contact per week. Such activity was essential to a successful university and it was important that UCL adhered to what it had communicated to students.
- e. In response to a query on the performance of Postgraduate (PG) Admissions this year, the Provost acknowledged that the significant rise in applications had increased pressure on the PG admissions team. Immediate steps had been taken to address the issues arising which included allocating resource for increased staffing levels as well prioritising the work of issuing Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) numbers.

141. Re-Opening Campus Strategy

141.1. Ms Fiona Ryland, Chief Operating Officer, set out the re-opening campus strategy. The following points were made during the presentation:

- a. The Chief Operating Officer, the Chief of Staff for the Chief Operating Officer, the Director of Estates Operations and Director of Sustainability had been leading work on re-opening campus. The latter had special responsibility for preparing for the second wave of Covid-19. Health and Safety Committee had been meeting fortnightly during this period and were thanked for their efforts.
- b. A safety-first approach was being taken with staff union and students' union representative members of the Education and Operations Delivery Group that oversaw the re-opening work.
- c. All buildings were now open apart from a number of landlord controlled buildings. Risk assessments and statutory checks had taken place. Capacity in buildings was set at 25% with a one-way system implemented in buildings and signage added. Transparent masks would be provided to staff who were in student-facing roles. There had been a policy change requiring face coverings to be worn indoors and outdoors unless an individual had an exemption.
- d. Professional Services' office space had been re-purposed to increase study space for students required due to the restriction to 25% capacity in buildings.

- e. Protocols for case management of single cases, several cases, local lockdowns and national lockdowns had been developed. Protect and Connect had been introduced to log symptoms and confirmed cases; it replaced the online form. A daily review group was monitoring reporting and was liaising with Camden Public Health.
- f. A pilot on testing had taken place with further roll out planned.
- g. International students who were required to quarantine were encouraged to arrive early, and could stay in their UCL accommodation free of charge while in quarantine.
- h. Student residence advisors would be available 24/7 onsite and available to undertake welfare checks. An online community programme had been developed to support social interaction in Halls. There were also enhanced cleaning regimes.

141.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

- a. A Council member advocated the undertaking of testing of staff and students. The Provost advised that the matter was being kept under constant review by UCL.
- b. The delivery of face-to-face teaching had polarised opinion among academic staff and the situation would need to be carefully managed. The Provost explained that this matter was being led by local leadership in faculties who had been advised to handle issues in a sensitive way.
- c. There was a query on how the expectations of students were being managed and whether there was a policy in place. The Provost advised that the communication to students had set out clearly what students could expect when arriving to campus. There was a policy of no refunds as UCL would deliver high quality teaching.
- d. In response to a question on how Council would address the issue of students gathering together socially in large numbers, the Chief Operating Officer advised that security officers had been asked to communicate with students who were not compliant and a communication campaign had been launched by the Students' Union to empower people to communicate with those who were not compliant. There would be communications circulated for non-compliance and there was a process in place for dealing with persistent non-compliance behaviour under the disciplinary procedure.
- e. In response to a question on how standards of online teaching would be assured and who would be responsible for making interventions where necessary, the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) advised that there had been great engagement with the training resources put in place on online pedagogy. Student feedback would form an important element of monitoring at a local level with escalation where necessary. The Students' Union had been focusing on communications that made the government guidance clear to students and had been only funding core activity and not social activity for societies and clubs.

141.3. Council received the update on the re-opening campus strategy.

142. Student Recruitment Update 2020/21

142.1. Professor Anthony Smith, provided an update on the latest trends for student recruitment for 2020/21. The following key points were made during the presentation:

- a. Prior to the Government's reversal on the use of the A-level algorithm, UCL had reached its target of UG 5,884 students. UCL welcomed the Government's decision and was delighted to accept those who had met their offer. The government also lifted the cap on specialist courses such as medicine, with additional grant funding made available to support this. Applicants who had not been offered a place prior to the Government's reversal had been invited to reactivate their offer. There had been 2,500 forms returned with 1,000 meeting their offer. As a result, it was now expected that approximately 1,000 more UG students would enrol at UCL.
- b. The current rate of deferrals was comparable to last year. However, the formal census deadline was 1 December 2020 and there was a possibility of withdrawals taking place for a variety of reasons prior to that date.
- c. For PGT programmes there had been variability in recruitment across programmes with some programmes over-recruiting and some programmes under-recruiting. There had been a 25% increase in applications and 26,500 offers had been made, which represented an increase of 19% year-on-year. There had been an increase in the deferral rate for PGT programmes
- d. The PGT Admissions team had been experiencing extraordinary pressure due to the large increase in applications. The issuance of CAS had been prioritised as UCL was aware of the impact of Covid-19 on the opening hours of embassies where visas would need to be acquired. It was recognised that this was a mission critical area and work was underway to increase the resilience of the PGT admissions team.

142.2. Council members expressed concern about the recent developments with PGT admissions and its impact on the applicant experience as well as student recruitment and sought reassurance that a 'lessons learnt' approach would be taken.

142.3. Council received the Student Recruitment Update for 2020/21.

143. Confidential: Financial Sustainability Update (7-109)

143.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minute.

143.2. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minute.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

144. Governance Working Group Update (7-110)

144.1. Baroness Valentine, Vice-Chair of Council and Chair of the Governance Working Group (GWG), introduced the paper which provided an update on the first meeting of the GWG, the proposed changes to the membership and the terms of reference.

144.2. The following key points were made during the discussion:

- a. In the interests of transparency, the minutes of GWG meetings and reports of the GWG should be open and publicly available and should be placed in the first part of the agenda. The Chair of the GWG advised that the update to Council had been drafted rapidly after the GWG meeting. It was agreed that minutes should be publicly available in the future.
- b. There was discussion about recommendation 7 of the Halpin Report which had been identified as a quick fix. Council members were encouraged to write to the Secretary to Council if they had suggestions for future briefings.

144.3. Council:

- a. Received the Governance Working Group Update Report.
- b. Approved the amended terms of reference, now including a reference to equality and diversity.
- c. Approved the membership of the group.
- d. Endorsed the GWG recommendation that no recommendation to remove Statute 18 would be made through this process, however, this did not preclude the potential to amend the statute should it be desired.

145. UCL Honours Degree Outcomes Statement (7-111)

145.1. Council approved the amendments to the UCL Honours Degree Outcomes Statement for publication.

146. Students' Union Budget for 2020/21 (7-112)

146.1. Council, on the recommendation of Finance Committee, approved the Students' Union UCL 2020-21 consolidated budget for financial year 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021.

146.2. Council noted that it would receive a budget reset for approval in early 2021.

147. Student Complaints Procedure (7-113)

147.1. Council approved amendments to the Student Complaints Procedure.

148. Council Committee Membership Affirmation (7-114)

148.1. Council affirmed Ms Lindsay Nicholson’s appointment as a member of Nominations Committee and Honorary Degrees and Fellowships Committee for a further year.

149. OfS Reportable Events (7-115)

149.1. Council received a report on the continued approach to oversee UCL’s compliance with the OfS Regulatory Framework, on UCL’s compliance, including the Reportable Events that have been reported since the last council meeting in July 2020, information that has been requested by the OfS as part of their continued monitoring of the ongoing conditions of registration for UCL and information on the OfS approach to Covid-19 and UCL’s compliance with their guidance.

150. Date of Next Meeting

150.1. The next meeting of Council was due to take place on Monday 19 October 2020 at 2:30pm. The meeting would be held virtually.

Wendy Appleby, Secretary to Council
September 2020