



COUNCIL

Thursday 19 May 2011

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Sir Stephen Wall (*Chair*)

Professor David Attwell	Dr Bob Barber
Ms Anne Bulford (<i>Treasurer</i>)	Mr Michael Chessum
Professor Malcolm Grant	Mr Mark Knight
(<i>President and Provost</i>)	Ms Catherine Newman
Ms Vivienne Parry (<i>Vice-Chair</i>)	Ms Katharine Roseveare
Dr Benet Salway	Dr Gill Samuels
Professor Chris Thompson	Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe
Professor Maria Wyke	

In attendance: Mr Rex Knight (Vice-Provost (Operations)); Mr Nick McGhee (Academic Services); Mr Tim Perry (Secretary to Council); Ms Mandy Smith (*vice* Matthew Burgess); Mrs Alison Woodhams (Director of Finance); Professor Michael Worton (Vice-Provost (Academic and International)).

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Matthew Burgess, Ms Philippa Foster Back, Mr Rob Holden, Dr Stephanie Schorge and Professor Nick Tyler.

Any member of Council who had (or who knew of a family member who had) a material, personal, financial or other beneficial interest in any item on the Agenda was requested to declare that interest at the beginning of the meeting in order that such declaration could be recorded in these Minutes.

Key to abbreviations used in these Minutes:

BASc	Bachelor of Arts and Sciences
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
KPI	Key Performance Indicator

Strategic and Management Business

89 PROVOST'S GREEN PAPER

[Council Minute 83D, 2010-11]

Received

89.1 APPENDIX C 4/87 (10-11) – the Provost's Green Paper 2011-2021.

89.2 A presentation, filed with these Minutes as APPENDIX C 4/93 (10-11), and an oral report by the Provost.

Noted

89.3 Council was invited to discuss the Green Paper and agree to its dissemination to the wider UCL community. Feedback and suggestions would then be invited from across the UCL community and it was intended that the Provost would convene a number of 'town meetings' to discuss the Green Paper. A final version of the document would then be prepared in light of the consultation for submission to Council at its meeting on 6 July 2011. At that meeting, Council would be invited to adopt the document as a Council White Paper for the period 2011-2021 and to agree proposals for its overview and monitoring of the implementation of the initiatives and other actions envisaged in the document.

Reported

89.4 The outlook of the Green Paper was that of a world-class university with a clear, aspirational vision in a period of financial attrition and increasing international competition. Over the seven years since the Provost's first Green Paper in 2004, UCL had developed a range of other institutional strategies and could now be regarded as 'strategy rich'.

89.5 A number of radical proposals in the paper were contained in section 5, *Transforming education*. These included:

- A proposed reduction in the number of entry points to the university through the creation of more generic programmes, such as the Bachelor of Arts and Sciences (BASc) degree.
- A proposal to move towards a semester system. Although potentially challenging, such a change would give UCL the opportunity for more effective interaction with international partners. UCL was now in a minority of Russell Group universities that had not moved to a semester system.
- Replacement of the honours system with a grade point average system similar to the US model, or the parallel operation of honours and GPA systems.

- 89.6 Although the Green Paper assumed that UCL would continue to be bound by the Government's student number quotas, the Provost noted that there was now some expectation that the Government would lift these restrictions, provided that doing so could avoid (i) an adverse impact on the student loan book and (ii) cross-flows of students across the sector which would weaken more vulnerable institutions. It was thought that universities might be permitted to admit as many students as they wished with A-level grades of at least AAB. This would represent a freeing up of the quota for over 70% of the UCL student body, permitting the enrolment of additional students without financial penalty. There had been recent newspaper reports that this proposal would find its way into the Government's forthcoming White Paper on Higher Education, publication of which was now expected in late June or July 2011. If confirmed, this would provide UCL with opportunities for growth wherever academic departments offering high-demand programmes of study had the appetite and resources for increasing their student numbers. Such a development would also mean that new programmes, such as the BAsc to be launched in 2012, could be developed without reducing the number of places available on existing programmes.
- 89.7 Seen in this context, the Green Paper's view of the potential for growth in student numbers was downbeat, although it was stressed that it was not yet certain that Government policy would move in this direction. The Provost further noted that the introduction of the £9,000 undergraduate fee in 2012-13 would reduce the financial differentiation between home/EU and overseas students fees. The potential opportunity to increase home/EU numbers at fees without penalty would give institutions a greater range of options for growing and maintaining financial viability than had been the case in recent years, when growth in international student numbers had been the only realistic option.
- 89.8 The lifting of the compulsory retirement age for staff was expected to present real challenges to all HEIs, as had proved the case in the US. One model currently under consideration involved an enhancement of the package in the final years before retirement on the acceptance of a contractual agreement to retire on a given date. There was no intention, however, to amend UCL's academic promotions process.
- 89.9 The Provost intended to prepare an executive summary of his Green Paper ahead of the consultation process with the UCL community.

Discussion

- 89.10 Council members warmly congratulated the Provost on an excellent document, which was felt to balance an inspiring vision with well-grounded detail. The following issues were raised in the course of an extensive discussion of the Green Paper:
- A number of members were concerned that the document gave the impression of UCL seeking to 'Americanize' itself.

The Provost noted that, while this was not the intention, it had to be recognised that the US system had been adopted almost throughout the world. Outside the UK, only a small number of Commonwealth countries were still using the honours system for the classification of degrees and this put UK graduates at a disadvantage as their qualifications were not easily understood internationally. A group of Russell Group universities was currently considering the issue, and was liaising with employers, the CBI and the Council for Industry and Higher Education.

- With regard to the proposal to move to a semester system, it was suggested the Green Paper should make clear that the operational implications of such a move had been recognised and would be fully addressed in taking forward this initiative.
- With respect to a possible significant growth in student numbers against the background described above, it was suggested that the UCL Bloomsbury Masterplan (which Council would discuss and be asked to approve at its meeting in July 2011) needed not only to enhance the quality but also increase the capacity of the estate.
- There was a danger of interdisciplinary programmes such as the BAsC being perceived as unfocussed by employers, at least in comparison to more specifically vocational programmes. It would be important to communicate effectively the high standards of entry to the programme.
- The potential implications for fair access of UCL's introduction in 2012 of a GCSE foreign language requirement were raised. The Provost noted that issues around the foreign language requirement had been carefully considered before the decision was taken to introduce it. More than 80% of UCL's undergraduate intake already met the requirement.
- Differing comments were made about UCL's high staff:student ratio, referred to under *Future economies* in the Green Paper. One Council member urged that the value of this favourable ratio in attracting students should not be overlooked. It was also noted, however, that, as staff costs accounted for 60% of institutional expenditure, it was incumbent upon UCL to satisfy itself of the value of maintaining such a ratio.
- In respect of the potential for supporting applicants to postgraduate taught programmes, it was proposed that consideration should be given to incorporating a commitment to seek collaborative agreements with financial agencies for the provision of loans to such applicants. It was also suggested that UCL should consider seeking to diversify the postgraduate taught portfolio through the provision of a greater number of flexible sub-units of Master's programmes which could be taken on a modular basis.

- The Green Paper did not refer to UCL's overseas campuses. Although it was noted that this issue was addressed in the International Strategy, it was suggested that the Green Paper ought nevertheless to make reference to such developments.
- It was suggested that the word 'enterprise' risked alienating those for whom it connoted purely commercial activities. It was further suggested that the combining of social and commercial enterprise under a single term was unhelpful to both. The Provost noted the point but was unsure that any satisfactory alternative term could be identified; nevertheless, additional emphasis on the not-for-profit nature of some activities falling under the heading of 'enterprise' could be incorporated into the paper. It was also proposed that some linkage could be made between enterprise and the Grand Challenges.
- An academic member raised concerns about UCL's student admissions operations, particularly the tardy processing of applications. It was noted that recent problems in this area had been addressed by the appointment of a number of additional staff. A steering group, chaired by the Vice-Provost (Operations), had been tasked with investigating further the need to modernise admissions structures and selection processes at UCL and would report later in 2011.
- The paper presented an opportunity to underline the lifetime relationship with UCL alumni. Such an ongoing relationship would provide a source of data with which to assess whether the UCL student experience was proving to be of tangible benefit in the years after graduation.
- In relation to the eventual monitoring of an implementation plan, it was suggested that there would be benefit in elements of the paper being translated into Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to which senior officers could be held accountable over the coming years.
- It was suggested that the Green Paper include a stronger statement on Continuing Professional Development.
- It was suggested that the paper made commitments to seeking to eliminate waste without specifying what constituted waste or clarifying where responsibility for making such decisions lay.
- The proposed executive summary might usefully provide an opportunity to cite evidence for the assertion that UCL was a global university.

89.11

Council members also proposed the following specific amendments to the paper:

- The opening *Vision* section should be amended to incorporate reference to staff, and to strengthen further the references to research.

- The vision of ‘Developing future generations of leaders in scholarship, research, business and innovation’ should also include reference to the professions and to public servants.
- The heading *UCL’s Operating Principles* should be reconsidered, as there was a danger of its being understood to refer to the means by which the strategy would be achieved, rather than the statement of ethical principles given in that section. The alternative phrase ‘guiding principles’ was suggested. It was suggested too that the term ‘ethical’, because it meant different things to different people, needed to be used carefully and sparingly.
- Reference to the successful modernisation of UCL, according to proposals laid out in the 2007 White Paper, should be incorporated.
- With reference to the comprehensive nature of UCL, the ‘gaps’ in its academic coverage, for example the absence of a business school, should be referred to and justified.
- Some reference to UCL’s contribution to cultural awareness should be incorporated into *The Impact of a Comprehensive University*.
- It was suggested that the reference to the development of new programmes in distance learning sat uncomfortably with the reference later on the same page to the importance of the estate in contributing to a world-class educational experience. In addressing this, consideration should also be given to whether a UCL distance learning degree was held to be of equal value to one gained on campus.

89.12 The Provost thanked Council members for their valuable and constructive suggestions and indicated that he would produce a revised draft of the Green Paper, taking account of the Council discussion, before the document was further disseminated.

89.13 Council was expected to adopt the document as a UCL strategy for 2011-21 at its meeting on 6 July 2011. It was noted, however, that if the Government Higher Education White Paper had still not been published by then, it would be sensible to delay publication of the Council strategy until after the publication of the Government document.

RESOLVED

89.14 **That Council endorse the Provost’s draft Green Paper and agree to its dissemination to the wider UCL community.**

90 **UCL AND THE SCHOOL OF PHARMACY**

[Council Minute 83B, 2010-11]

Noted

- 90.1 A meeting of Council members and senior officers of the School of Pharmacy and UCL had taken place on 4 May 2011 to discuss the possible merger of the two institutions. UCL Council members attending had been provided in advance of the meeting with a copy of the School of Pharmacy's 'Our Future' document (APPENDIX *¹ C 4/88 (10-11)) and a briefing note by the Vice-Provost (Operations) (APPENDIX * C 4/89 (10-11)).

Received

- 90.2 Oral reports by the Chair of Council and the Provost.

Reported

- 90.3 At a meeting on 12 May 2011 the School of Pharmacy's Council had voted, in a secret ballot, for merger with UCL by 12 votes to 8. A due diligence process would now commence to enable UCL to satisfy itself that merger would not entail its taking on any unanticipated liabilities or difficulties. Depending on the timing of this exercise and any necessary follow-up, it was possible that a formal merger proposal would be put to the UCL Council meeting on 6 July 2011. The process would then be taken forward by a transfer of assets from the School to UCL followed by a petition to the Privy Council from the School's Council to surrender the School's Charter and wind up the corporation. The precise timing of this was still subject to discussion but the intention was that the transfer and *de facto* merger should take place early in the calendar year 2012.
- 90.4 The Provost thanked all Council members who had been able to attend the meeting with their School of Pharmacy counterparts on 4 May 2011.
- 90.5 Council was now asked to confirm that, subject to due diligence being undertaken satisfactorily and in the event that a formal merger proposal was not available to put before the next Council meeting, the Chair be authorised to approve the merger on Council's behalf.

Discussion

- 90.6 Council discussed what it understood to be the principal concerns of those who had voted against the merger. The Provost commended what he saw as a visionary decision on the part of the School of Pharmacy Council.

¹ An appendix or annexe reference preceded by an asterisk indicates that, for the sake of economy, the document was not issued with the Agenda but is available on request to the Council Secretary's office (e-mail – n.mcghee@ucl.ac.uk, telephone 020 7679 8878).

RESOLVED

- 90.7 **That, subject to due diligence being undertaken satisfactorily and in the event that a formal merger proposal is not available to put before the Council meeting of 6 July 2011, the Chair be authorised to approve the merger with the School of Pharmacy on Council’s behalf.**

91 **UCL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Professor Michael Worton, Vice-Provost (Academic and International), was in attendance for this item.

Received

- 91.1 APPENDIX C 4/90 (10-11), a contextual statement introducing APPENDIX C 4/91 (10-11), the proposed UCL Public Engagement Strategy, endorsed by the Provost’s Senior Management Team.
- 91.2 An oral report by the Vice-Provost (Academic and International).

Reported

- 91.3 UCL was a Beacon for Public Engagement, having established a vision for Public Engagement that had been embraced by HEFCE and the research councils and which had proved influential in the development of other institutions’ strategies. For example, ‘Bright Clubs’ had been established by 12 other universities, and Public Engagement now formed an essential element of many research grant applications. The Strategy was work in progress; a detailed action plan would be developed in due course.

Discussion

- 91.4 Co-production of research was thought likely to become an increasingly important theme over the next decade. Some 12,500 members of the public had already been involved with projects funded by UCL’s Public Engagement Unit.
- 91.5 Council commended the Strategy and the work of Professor Worton and his colleagues in developing this important initiative.

RESOLVED

- 91.6 **That the UCL Public Engagement Strategy be approved.**

92 **REGULATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT – AMENDMENT**

Noted

- 92.1 A note by the Secretary to Council, introducing proposed amendments to UCL Regulation for Management 10, had been issued with the Agenda as APPENDIX C 4/92 (10-11).
- 92.2 The Chair advised that, in the light of queries raised about the proposed amendments by two academic staff members of Council, consideration of the matter would be deferred to a subsequent meeting of Council, pending further consideration by the UCL officers concerned of the wording of the proposed amendments.

Tim Perry
Secretary to Council
1 June 2011