



Confirmed

Education Committee

3 December 2019

Minutes

Present:

Professor Anthony Smith (Chair)

Professor Deborah Gill; Dr Helen Matthews; Dr Simon Banks; Dr Julie Evans; Ms Wendy Appleby; Ms Ashley Slanina-Davies; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Ms Emer O'Driscoll; Ms Jiaqi Guo; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Olga Thomas; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Arne Hofmann; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Hazel Smith; Mr Derfel Owen.

In attendance: Ms Katie Price (deputising for Ms Megan Gerrie); Ms Joanne Moles for Items 28 and 29; and Mr Darren Payne (Acting Secretary for meeting).

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms Megan Gerrie; Ms Aatikah Malik; Mr Ian Davis; Ms June Hedges; Professor Eva Sorensen; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Professor Mike Porter; Professor Norbert Pachler.

Part I: Preliminary Business

21. Chair's Business

21.1. The Chair noted that there were 18 Education Committee members in attendance, which was quorate.

22. Minutes of the last meeting

- 22.1. Approved – the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 October 2019 (EdCom Minutes 1-20, 2019-20).

23. Matters arising from the minutes

- 23.1. It was noted that Academic Committee had approved Education Committee's recommendation for the new MASc (EdCom Minutes 6.4, 2019-20) outlined in EdCom paper 1-08 (19-20).
- 23.2. It was confirmed that a working group had been established as agreed at (EdCom Minute 9.4, 2019-20) to look at Statistical Reporting for Exam Boards. The Director of Academic Services confirmed that two meetings had already taken place, and there were already recommendations and an upcoming workshop scheduled to take this forward as planned.
- 23.3. The response to (EdCom Minute 7, 2019-20) was covered under Item 3 of this meeting's agenda below (EdCom Minute 24, 2019-20).

24. Response to Students' Union Priorities (Minute 7, 19-20)

- 24.1. The Director (Education Communications) confirmed that the Student Priorities Action Tracker is updated each year to reflect the priorities of the SU sabbatical officers and SSCC report recommendations. The Student Experience Committee (StEC) uses it to monitor the work going on across the University to address these priorities. The Action Tracker was identified as the main location to track and propose solutions to problems.
- 24.2. Responding to the report considered by the last EdCom, the Director (Education Communications) confirmed that a new institutional ChangeMaker project investigating the barriers to students participating in their learning community and student engagement activities would include part-time students. The Assessment Review, run by Arena and VP Education, would address clarity of assessment criteria.

24.3. It was noted that StEC should refer issues that may require regulatory change (i.e. extenuating circumstances, or interruptions) to Education Committee.

25. Response to Industrial Action (Minute 19, 19-20)

25.1. Received - the paper at EdCom 2-01 (19-20) presented by the Director of Academic Services, which noted that the Strike Mitigation Task Group had been reconvened in response to industrial action taking place at UCL and recent Office of the Independent Adjudicator feedback on UCL's handling of the 2017-18 industrial action.

25.2. The main focus of the reconvened Task Group is on missed learning opportunities, as assessment mitigations produced by the Task Group in 2017-18 and published in the Academic Manual Chapter 6, Annex 6.2 were still applicable.

25.3. It was confirmed that the Task Group had produced additional guidance document for departments, and Faculty Tutors present at Education Committee were asked to give feedback on whether the guidance covered those questions being asked in departments, and whether the advice on recovering learning opportunities was also sufficient.

25.4. It was generally felt by all Faculties present that the general guidance given was sufficient, particularly when combined with 2017-18 assessment mitigation guidance. It was however noted that the guidance could potentially have been put out earlier so there was more time to react prior to staff undertaking industrial action. It was also noted that the guidance was broad, and unable to cover very specific problems within certain departments or students – these however are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

25.5. A query was raised regarding the 70% attendance rule. The Chair confirmed that students would not be penalised for missing any classes due to strike action, or for choosing not to cross a picket line.

- 25.6. It was raised amongst the discussion that the guidance focused on Taught students, and what work was being undertaken with respects to Research student specific issues. It was noted that the next Research Degrees Committee (RDC) was not until March 2020, but the Chair of RDC had been contacted in order to establish what advice should be given.
- 25.7. Education Committee also raised whether the guidance could be reviewed, particularly where a summative assessment went ahead during industrial action, and a student received a zero absent for the assessment as a result. It was felt that UCL could not assume why a student would not want to cross a picket line, and that UCL should not be putting students into a position where they feel conflicted. It was suggested that this was a potential area of discussion at the next Task Group meeting.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

26. Student Experience Transformation

- 26.1. The Director of Education Services & Transformation gave a presentation providing an overview of the Student Experience Transformer Project – a three to four year programme aimed to: improve and transform the student experience, remove administrative inefficiencies and duplication of effort for UCL staff in Departments and Faculties and enable those staff to carry out more valued activities and fulfilling careers at UCL.
- 26.2. It was noted that some areas had already been funded and were underway, including: funding of the Academic Model Project Phase 4; additional resources for Student Success Platform to support roll out support development of Programme Summaries in SITS so they are CMA Compliant, review support structures and systems for flexible/online/distance programmes, and review of the Digital Learning Environment.
- 26.3. In order to ensure that the full programme is built on solid research and insight into staff and student perspectives on what could be improved about the student experience in Spring 2020 we will undertake an Lifecycle Mapping exercise over three phases. Phase 1 will be desktop research based on

NSS/PTES/SES/New to UCL, PA Consulting, Uniforum Staff Satisfaction, and Cubane Data. It was noted that Student Qualitative comments were of particular use, as where students have commented on something it usually means they felt the most strongly about it. This part of the programme is intended to be complete by the end of Term 1 of the 2019/20 academic year.

- 26.4. Phase 2 was highlighted as the most important, with external consultants being bought in to assist with this part of the programme. Phase 2 will involve a comprehensive mapping of the Student Lifecycle during a student's time at UCL with clear start and end points that do not include admissions or graduation/alumni, but everything in between. The intention is to ensure there is powerful articulation from students, and to find what works and what does not throughout the journey at UCL – where value is added, or where there is not enough value.
- 26.5. Areas of shared pain between students and staff will be important to identify, as well as those areas where there may be a mismatch between how student and staff perceive certain areas and why any discrepancy exists.
- 26.6. Phase 3 is where the outputs of the programme will be discussed, and external consultation will end. There will be an opportunity for Education Committee to help identify those areas to focus on for improvement once the outputs are bought forward for discussion at future meetings.
- 26.7. It was confirmed that a fuller report would be circulated to members of Education Committee within a few weeks of the December meeting.
- 26.8. Faculty Tutors were asked to try and ensure attendance to the March 19 Faculty Tutor's Forum, as the full meeting would be dedicated to this topic, and possibly expanded to 2 hours.

Action: Faculty Tutors to note

27. Taught Student Research Misconduct

- 27.1. Received - the paper at EdCom 2-02 (19-20) presented by the Registrar, which suggested amendments to the Academic Misconduct Procedure to also include some Research Misconduct on the basis that the current Research Misconduct procedures were too heavy handed for some offences.
- 27.2. This included a common issue in 2018/19 where taught students had not obtained ethical approval from UCL Research Ethics Committee (REC) before starting to collect the data for their project.
- 27.3. It was acknowledged a student not obtaining the necessary ethical clearance could be due to an oversight within the department where it should be treated as a defect in the assessment and not penalised, or due to a student knowingly deceiving where it should be treated as Academic Misconduct.
- 27.4. The relevant sections of the regulations would be redrafted, and brought back to Education Committee at a future meeting for approval – this included expanding the Academic Misconduct definitions to include failure to obtain ethical approval where there was intent to deceive.

28. Examination Durations (Minute 8, 19-20)

- 28.1. Received - the paper at EdCom 2-03 (19-20) presented by the Examinations Manager, who noted that there had not been any objections to the overall report (EdCom 1-10 (19-20)), but the issue of 1.5 and 2.5 hour exams was something that needed further discussion.
- 28.2. In the report it was highlighted that the number of exams at these durations are fairly small, but caused significant disruption to those students taking the longest duration exams – up to 16 interruptions, which could be reduced by half. Faculties had been consulted about moving away from offering exams with a half-hour duration. Most were supportive of change, but the Faculty Tutor for MAPS reported there were concerns from colleagues in his Faculty.

- 28.3. It was raised that whilst process should not drive pedagogy, there was no compelling reason that an exam should be these durations – particularly when the level of disruption at a large examination hall such as the ExCel was taken into consideration.
- 28.4. It was agreed that for now Education Committee would strongly encourage the move away from 1.5 and 2.5 hour exams, but not force departments to change them. It was also agreed that only currently existing exams with these durations could continue, but that no new or amendments to assessment would be approved to be 1.5 or 2.5 hours in duration.

29. Exam Paper Queries Report

- 29.1. Received - the paper at EdCom 2-04 (19-20) introduced by the Examinations Manager, which detailed the number and type of queries and errors on exam papers which candidates raised during examinations during the main exam period April-May 2019.
- 29.2. The report indicated that there had been a large increase from the previous year, however it was acknowledged that this may be due to greater awareness from students knowing they can do this.
- 29.3. Current practice was that where candidates write down any assumptions that they make to enable them to continue with the exam and answer the question, and the invigilator records the errors/queries on the exam paper query form so that this can be taken into account when marking scripts.
- 29.4. It was raised that this practice may not be so beneficial where there is one minor clarification needed, which has to be dealt with via a single process that is designed for more serious issues requiring mitigation.
- 29.5. It was confirmed that errata sheets are still issued in examination halls, but not announcements which cause disruption and additional confusion or stress for candidates.

29.6. It was agreed that UCL should be aspiring to have papers with as few errors as possible. The impact errors can have on students means that there should be a greater level of scrutiny before papers are signed off.

29.7. The Examinations Manager confirmed they will circulate the raw data including the number of actual errors and not just queries, and in addition the number of errors within a department normalised against their total number of papers.

Action: Examinations Manager

30. Revised ASER Procedures for 2019-20

30.1. Received - the paper at EdCom 2-05 (19-20) introduced by the Pro-Vice-Provost (Student Experience), which noted that QRSC had recommended some minor amendments to Section 2 of Chapter for 2019-20, including change to a singular submission for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes, and adjustment to some of the annexes within the chapter.

30.2. Approved – the amendments to the ASER Procedures for 2019-20 at EdCom 2-05 (19-20).

31. Support to Study Review

31.1. Received - the paper at EdCom 2-06 (19-20) introduced by the Director of Academic Services, which advised Education Committee of plans to review and coordinate work in relation to student support regulations and personal tutor support.

31.2. It was noted that some processes were currently not working as intended – such as the ‘Fitness to Study’ procedure, which has only been used from start to finish once owing to difficulties in the process.

31.3. The report highlighted the current complexity of UCL’s student support regulations, and a need to ensure students are filtered into the right process rather than having to know themselves where to go.

31.4. The aim was to have a deep look into all of the processes, highlight any quick fixes to be approved at the April Education Committee for the next academic year, with the overall package complete for the following academic year in 2021/22.

32. Suspensions of Regulations Annual Report 2018-19

- 32.1. Received - the paper at EdCom 2-06 (19-20) introduced by the Chair, which summarised the requests for suspensions of regulations (SoRs), interruptions of study and other cases requiring approval by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) and Education Committee (EdCom) Chair during the 2018-19 academic session.
- 32.2. It was noted that the overall numbers of suspension of regulations and higher approvals were going down, which suggested previous regulatory changes made by Education Committee are having the desired effect.
- 32.3. The main discussion focused on what could be learned from the report, and the areas within the regulations that are not fit for purpose if they are being required to be suspended frequently.
- 32.4. The main area highlighted as a problem was Support to Study, which is being reviewed in 2019-20 as described in the paper EdCom 2-06 (19-20). The Support to Study review should reduce the overall quantity of Suspensions of Regulations further.
- 32.5. It was also noted that a new SharePoint system has been introduced as an interim measure to endure GDPR compliance when submitting requests, and that this system should help provide additional data on requests for future reports.
- 32.6. The Chair wanted to express Education Committee's thanks to the Policy Adviser (Education Governance) for putting the report together.

33. Degree Outcomes Descriptors and Statement

- 33.1. Received - the paper at EdCom 2-07 (19-20) introduced by the Director of Academic Services, which provided an introduction to the Office for Student (OfS) initiative to address grade inflation across the sector.
- 33.2. It was noted that it will be a requirement of the OfS to have one in place by the end of the 2019-20 academic year.
- 33.3. Education Committee was informed that a group would be convened to work on this this, and members may be asked to join this group.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

34. MASC and BASc Qualification Descriptors

- 34.1. Approved – new MASc and BASc Qualification Descriptors at EdCom 2-08 (19-20).

35. In-session amendments to Chapter 2: Qualifications and Credit Framework

- 35.1. Approved – the in-session amendments to Chapter 2: Qualifications and Credit Framework at EdCom 2-09 (19-20).

36. Approval of New Programmes

- 36.1. Approved – the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EdCom 2-10 (19-20).

37. Suspensions of Regulations

- 37.1. Approved – the Suspensions of Regulations at EdCom 2-11 (19-20).

38. Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

- 38.1. Approved – the minutes of the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub Committee held 24 September 2019.
- 38.2. Approved – the minutes of the Quality Review Sub Committee held 17 September 2019

39. Dates of Next Meeting

39.1. The dates of the EdCom meetings for the rest of the 2019-20 session are:

- Tuesday 25 February 2020 10.30am (Room 1.20 Malet Place Engineering Building)
- Thursday 30 April 2020 10.30am (Room B.05 Darwin Building)
- Monday 8 June 2020 10.30am (Room B.05 Darwin Building)
- RESERVED MEETING Thursday 16 July 2020 10.30am (Room B.05 Darwin Building)

Darren Payne (for Lizzie Vinton)

Acting Secretary to EdCom for the meeting

Policy Advisor (Regulations and Quality Assurance)

Academic Services UCL extension 57678, email: darren.i.b.payne@ucl.ac.uk

20 January 2020