Education Committee

Extraordinary Meeting

5 June 2023

Confirmed Minutes

Present:

Professor Kathy Armour (Chair)

Mr Hamza Ahmed; Dr Ali Abolfathi; Professor Simon Banks; Ms Karen Barnard; Dr Nicole Brown; Dr Parama Chaudhury; Mr Ian Davis; Professor Sally Day; Dr Julie Evans; Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce; Ms June Hedges; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Katherine Holt; Ms Harriet Israel; Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho; Dr Rachel King; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Ms Mary McHarg; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Mary Richardson; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Olga Thomas; Ms Lizzie Vinton; Dr Nalini Vittal; Professor Nicola Walshe, Dr Kathryn Woods and Professor Stan Zochowski.

In attendance: Ms Stephanie Esuola and Ms Kylie McCarroll (Minute 92); Mr Ashley Doolan (Secretary) and Mr Rob Traynor (Assistant Secretary).

Apologies: Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva; Dr Margaret Mayston and Professor Bill Sillar

Part I: Preliminary Business

89. Welcome and Announcements

89.1. The Chair welcomed Professor Katherine Holt who will attend the meeting as the representative for the MAPS Faculty for the remainder of the 2023-24 academic session. She also welcomed Mr Zak Liddell, Director of Education Services, and Mr Ashley Doolan, Head of Academic Policy, Quality and Standards and Secretary to Education Committee to their first meetings in their new posts.

90. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

90.1. **Approved** – the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 April 2023 [EdCom Minutes 76-88, 2022-23] at EDCOM 7-01 (22-23), without corrections.

91. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

91.1. A matter related to minute 83, Examinations and Assessment Contingency Panel Update was noted, and it was agreed to discuss it under the related item on the agenda for this meeting under minute 93.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

92.   Scheduling transformation – improving the student experience of the curriculum

92.1.   Received - a paper at EDCOM 7-02 (22-23) presented by Ms Stephanie Esuola, Programme Director, Scheduling Transformation and Ms Kylie McCarroll, Student Records Manager on the proposal to end the use of elective module collections built using "ALLUG" or "ALLPGT" coding, and to replace them with smaller, curated elective collections.

92.2.   EdCom noted that the use of these collections was not widespread, but that they contributed to a poor student experience for students on the affected programmes. Such students must choose from a vast number of modules, many of which are not relevant to their programme, or for which they lack relevant prerequisite knowledge. This in turn leads to a high number of rejections, requiring students to reselect modules.

92.3.   It was proposed to replace the remaining collections with alternatives, constructed using data on student preferences in module selection on the programme, looking back over 3-5 academic years. The approach would be sequenced, targeting the diets for new students first, in time for September enrolment, with subsequent work on continuing student diets during the Curriculum Data Maintenance window, in time for module selection in April. The Student Records team would lead this work, in conversation with programme leaders.

92.4.   The Chair noted that this approach would improve the student experience of module selection, reducing the need for most students on a programme to engage with lists of thousands of inappropriate modules, many of which they would not be allowed to take, while retaining the capacity for students who are interested to take modules that are not listed.

92.5.   EdCom was broadly supportive of the proposal, but noted that there were some complicating factors that would need to be looked at in greater detail, as they were likely contributing to the continued use of these collections: These included:
   i.   The pressure from affiliate partner institutions to accommodate students on combinations of modules that fit with their programme of study at their home institution. It was noted that more work needed to be done to look at the overall experience of affiliate students, of which this was an aspect.
   ii.   The limitations of the current academic model, as it has been set up in the student records system in its ability to support the delivery of highly interdisciplinary programmes, such as the BA European Social and Political Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.
   iii. The ongoing confusion about the different status of optional and elective modules, and how this difference is understood within academic departments and programmes.

92.6.   It was agreed that, while these issues would need to be addressed, it was important to focus on implementing solutions that worked for the majority of programmes first, before then turning to any programmes that may need to be necessary exceptions.

92.7.   **Approved** – the proposal at EDCOM 7-02 (22-23).

93.   Examinations and Assessment Contingency Panel update

93.1.   Received – a verbal update on the work of the EACP from its chair, Professor Norbert Pachler, accompanied by the latest version of the guidance produced for Boards of Examiners on measures available to them to mitigate for the impacts of the UCU Marking and Assessment Boycott at EDCOM 7-03 (22-23).

93.2.   The Chair introduce the item by reminding EdCom of the existing powers that are available to Boards and EdCom every year to address unique, emergency events. For example, there is an existing procedure for enabling Boards of Examiners to go ahead in the absence of their external examiners, which includes a full report of the operation of the Board to EdCom. She confirmed that these measures were not going to be applied algorithmically, without reference to the judgement of Boards of Examiners, unlike those measures taken during the pandemic.

93.3.   The matter raised at minute 91, which related to a concern about the use of large component and/or module exclusions as part of the measures outlined in the guidance was addressed by the Chair of EACP. He confirmed that the decision to permit progression or award where these measures had been taken rested with the Board of Examiners, which should only act where it is confident that programme learning outcomes had been achieved. He also noted that in most cases, these marks would subsequently become available, and be reflected in students' transcripts.

93.4.   EdCom received a verbal report of the changes made in the updated guidance, as well as other activity conducted by the EACP. This included:
    i.   That the guidance has been nuanced to account for the different durations and credit values of UG and PGT programmes.
    ii.   That guidance had been added to support Boards considering the progression of continuing undergraduate students.
    iii. That guidance given in documentation, and at briefing sessions with Board chairs and administrators has emphasised the importance of awarding only in instances where programme learning outcomes have been achieved.
    iv.   That the EACP had agreed specific mitigations for the LLM in the Faculty of Laws and iBSc programmes, which form part of medical education, given their non-standard programme structures.

93.5.   The Chair invited comments and questions on the paper. During the discussion, a series of points of clarification were given. For example, it was confirmed that Boards of Examiners should not award a student if there was a risk that the classification outcome would be reduced following the receipt of subsequent marks. While it would be possible to reissue an award where a student benefitted from an uplift to their classification, it would not be appropriate to reissue an award at a lower classification, given the significant impact this may have on work or further study secured with that award.

93.6.   EdCom also received clarification on the direction to departments to ensure that support was in place for students who progress with a significant amount of uncertain module marks. It was confirmed that the support required would be specific to the student or the cohort

affected. For example, where a programme cohort has experienced a significant delay in the receipt of marks and feedback for a compulsory module, it may be necessary to put additional time aside in the following year's modules for recap and reinforcement of last year's learning.

93.7. EdCom noted that feedback from some Boards of Examiners highlighted that examiners felt a significant amount of pressure to balance the need to uphold academic standards with the desire to enable as many of their students as possible to progress to award and into employment or further study. The Chair confirmed that this was a difficult and highly pressured situation for all involved and confirmed that UCL's approach had been developed to align with that being taken elsewhere in the sector, both in terms of the proportion of mitigation available, and the emphasis on academic judgment.

93.8. A number of concerns were raised by Dr Nalini Vittal regarding the extent of some of the available EACP mitigations. She highlighted the desirability of settling the current dispute as soon as possible and asked that her dissent be noted.

93.9. EdCom thanked the EACP for its work and welcomed the report on action taken to date.

93.10. The Chair confirmed that a special meeting of UCL Academic Board had been requisitioned to discuss some of the specific measures being proposed by the EACP. The meeting was due to take place on 9 June 2023.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

94. Any Other Business

94.1. EdCom received a report from one of the elected Academic Board members that their membership to EdCom was due to end and had not been extended to account for their period of parental leave. The Chair confirmed that she would investigate this matter.

95. Dates of Next Meeting

95.1. The dates of the EdCom meetings for the rest of the 2022-23 session are:
- Tuesday, 27 June 2023, 14.00 - 16:30
- Tuesday 25 July 2023, 14:00 - 16:30

Ashley Doolan (EdCom Secretary)
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June 2023