



Education Committee

6 December 2023

Confirmed Minutes

Present:

Professor Kathleen Armour (Chair)

Professor Simon Banks; Ms Karen Barnard; Dr Nicole Brown; Professor Parama Chaudhury; Mr Shaban Chaudhury; Ms Sarah Cowls; Mr Ian Davis; Professor Sally Day; Dr Julie Evans; Mr Daniel Farrell; Professor Ann Griffin; Ms June Hedges; Professor Arne Hofmann; Mr Ahmad Ismail; Dr Rachel King; Dr Sandra Leaton-Gray; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Margaret Mayston; Dr Jennifer McGowan; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Mary Richardson; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Francesca Scott; Dr Hazel Smith; Ms Issy Smith; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Professor Olga Thomas; Dr Nalini Vittal; Dr Kathryn Woods and Professor Stan Zochowski.

In attendance: Ms Lizzie Vinton (Minute 42), Ms Lisa French (Minute 43), Ms Kjell Horn (Minute 44); Ms Hannah Swallow (Minute 45); Mr Ashley Doolan (Secretary); Mr Rob Traynor (Assistant Secretary) and Ms Megan Gerrie (Observer).

Apologies: Mr Matteo Fumagalli, Ms Marie Gallagher, Professor Bill Sillar and Professor Nicola Walshe.

Part I: Preliminary Business

38. Welcome, Apologies and Announcements

38.1. The Chair led colleagues in extending thanks on behalf of Education Committee to Professor Simon Banks, Director of Education and Faculty Tutor in the Faculty of Engineering Sciences for his many years of dedicated service to advancing education and the student experience as part of Education Committee and the wider UCL community.

39. Minutes

39.1. Approved – the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 November 2023 [EdCom Minutes 26-37, 2023-24] at EDCOM 4-01 (23-24).

40. Matters Arising

- 40.1. Arising from minute 28, it was noted that the following departments had been notified by the Chair of the IQR Panel that they would be receiving an IQR visit in 2023-24:
- a) Department of Civil, Environmental and Geomatic Engineering
 - b) Department of Computer Science
 - c) Department of Economics
 - d) Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
 - e) Department of Mechanical Engineering
 - f) Department of Philosophy
 - g) Department of Physics and Astronomy
- 40.2. Arising from minute 32, it was noted that the report of the Personal Tutoring review had been released to the UCL community for wider discussion and consultation on the recommended next steps. The consultation closed on 1 February 2024.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

41. Student Experience Outcomes: Progress Update

- 41.1. Received – an invitation from the Chair for members to share updates on work being undertaken to improve the student experience within their departments and faculties, and challenges that are arising in doing so. During the conversation, the following points were noted:
- a) That departments were continuing to experience challenges with coordinating between different services to support students in need of reasonable adjustments, due to a perceived lack of clear processes and guidance in this area. The Executive Director of Student Services and Registrar agreed that this was an issue that required further investigation and agreed to follow this up on behalf of EdCom.
 - b) That where investment in high quality student space was being made, it was well received. For example, it was noted that the redevelopment work within the main atrium of the Institute of Education building had created a new and well-used environment that was effectively blending student study and social spaces and contributing to an improvement in the atmosphere of the building. The Chair noted that University Management Committee was seriously exploring how to increase such space elsewhere on campus.
 - c) That the Division of Psychology and Languages Sciences (PALS) had founded a BAME in PALS society which is being co-led by students and staff to raise awareness of good practice in inclusive teaching and learning through events and the sharing of news.
 - d) That the Office of Vice Provost Education and Student Experience had made additional support available to those departments facing challenges with key student experience outcomes that is targeted at securing expert advice on making effective changes.
- 41.2. The Chair invited members to continue their work in the area of enhancing the student experience, and to reflect on topics for discussion in the New Year. It was

agreed that EdCom would hold an away day later in the year to conduct a more strategic review of persistent challenges.

42. Programme Excellence Project Progress Report

- 42.1. Received – a progress report of the Programme Excellence Project (PEP) at EDCOM 4-02 (23-24) presented by Ms Lizzie Vinton, Project Manager for Programme Excellence. EdCom was asked to note the report and provide any comments it had on the progress being made.
- 42.2. The report noted that Faculty Steering Groups had been established during Term One, to review how to best align their current suite of programmes with the proposed portfolio model. EdCom noted that this revised model had been endorsed at its 25 July 2023 meeting, and that measures to transition to it were being worked up through task and finish groups made up of professional services teams and academic representatives.
- 42.3. The second half of the PEP, the Curriculum Review, was due to launch in Spring 2024. It was noted that there would be a greater need for academic input and oversight of this aspect of the project, and that the role of EdCom within this in providing assurance to Academic Committee and Council of the appropriateness of decisions being made, would be crucial to its success.

43. Degree Outcomes Steering Group

- 43.1. Received – a report containing an updated analysis of undergraduate degree outcomes at EDCOM 4-03 (23-24) presented by Professor Norbert Pachler, Pro-Vice Provost for Quality and Standards. EdCom was asked to review the analysis, and to endorse the recommended actions for the Degree Outcomes Steering Group.
- 43.2. EdCom noted that the Quality and Standards Committee had permanently re-established the Degree Outcomes Steering Group at its meeting on 15 November 2023. The updated Terms of Reference for the group were provided as part of the report and included responsibility for the preparation and publication of the annual Degree Outcomes Statement.
- 43.3. In preparation for its first meeting, Professor Pachler, Mr Daniel Farrell, Director of Student Operations, and Ms Lisa French, Quality and Standards Managers, had worked together to review and analyse outcomes data for 2021-22, both to identify UCL's current position, and also to identify where action was needed to start exploring how to remedy instances of unexplained attainment. This analysis showed that:
 - a) While UCL's standing against the Russell Group and the Sector had improved in some areas since the last analysis, there was still a high proportion of first class awards being issued.
 - b) That there was, specifically, a high proportion of unexplained awards at first class, as defined by the Office for Students, and that this would need to be investigated with some urgency.

- c) That the report had conducted detailed analysis of those faculties where more than 200 undergraduate awards per year were issued, and that some of the recommendations pertained to specific action within those faculties.
- 43.4. EdCom noted the report's recommendations, which committed to undertaking a reconciling of the data, to ensure that definitions being used by the OfS were understood and applied consistently within UCL's own analyses, to establish a benchmarking group of similar institutions in terms of size and entry profile, and to conduct more detailed investigation into the occurrence of unexplained attainment.
- 43.5. EdCom reflected on the importance of the work that had been conducted so far and endorsed the recommendations of the report. It was noted that while the steering group would be conducting a regulatory function, its work would also support a more data driven approach to the design and maintenance of our assessment regulations, particularly those related to progression, award, and classification.
- 43.6. It was noted that as part of the investigations into unexplained attainment, the Steering Group should be asked to model the impact of placing classification and borderline boundaries at, for example 69.50, rather than 70.00. It was also noted that the group should consider investigating the extent to which assessment markers were receiving sufficient initial and ongoing training in their roles, including the use of effective moderation.

44. Teaching Space

- 44.1. Received – a presentation, introduced by Dr Kathryn Woods, Pro-Vice Provost for Student Academic Engagement, and delivered by Ms Kjell Horn, Deputy Director for Faculty Estates, on the strategy for improving the existing teaching estate.
- 44.2. Within the presentation, it was acknowledged that student expectations of a contemporary, world class university were not being met by the variability of quality and appearance of our current teaching rooms. It was noted that key competitors had invested in improving their teaching estate in recent years, and that UCL was now identifying where action could be taken to improve its own spaces. For example, in the last twelve months, UCL had:
 - a) Completed capital refurbishment of eleven teaching spaces to bring them in line with UCL defined teaching space design standards.
 - b) Refreshed the paintwork in over half of teaching rooms.
 - c) Appointed 120 students to conduct daily checks of teaching spaces to ensure that maintenance issues were being reported and resolved as quickly as possible.
- 44.3. It was noted that the next steps were to continue the new cross-function approach between Estates and Information Services Division, as well as to re-establish the Teaching Improvement Steering Group, which would lead on projects such as a condition survey of the full estate, and a rolling programme of refurbishment or, where new space is identified, retiring of unsuitable space.

- 44.4. EdCom members reflected on the presentation and welcomed the direction of travel that it indicated. Members reflected on some of the pressures caused by the current state of the estate. It was noted that there continued to be a lack of large teaching spaces to support lectures, and a particular lack of those spaces in combination with dedicated break out or convening space – limiting opportunities for social interaction or flipping of the classroom within lecture teaching. In addition, it was noted that the lack of dedicated student social space or conferencing space was perpetuating a pressure on, and a misuse of, teaching spaces.
- 44.5. It was agreed that questions related to the teaching estate, and the kinds of spaces that may be needed to support advances in contemporary pedagogy, would be discussed further at the EdCom Away Day in 2024.

45. Update from the CMA Steering Group

- 45.1. Received – a report from the CMA Steering Group at EDCOM 4-04 (23-24) presented by Ms Hannah Swallow. The report provided an update on the work of the steering group and asked EdCom for approval or endorsement of three recommendations.
- 45.2. EdCom was asked to endorse an approach to managing different aspects of compliance with consumer protection legislation, particularly in relation to the management of information provided to applicants through the prospectus and other significant pre-offer information. Specifically, it recommended that EdCom take ownership of the policy and procedures designed to ensure compliance, to which it agreed. It was noted that in addition to Student Operations and Education Services, faculties and departments should also be recorded as responsible for the production of programme summaries.
- 45.3. EdCom also approved the proposal to continue current practice in the level of information provided about the composition of each programme, and the respective composition of staff delivering said programme in its published materials. It was agreed to keep this at the level of a programme level statement, highlighting where there may, for example, be practitioners or clinicians invited in to help deliver the professional aspects of the programme.
- 45.4. Finally, EdCom agreed that a working definition of contact hours should be developed and tasked the Education Policy Scrutiny Panel with conducting that work on behalf of EdCom during the remainder of the 2023-24 academic session.
- 45.5. It was noted that the group was reviewing current practice related to communication with applicants, offer holders and current students about changes to their programmes. This work sought to ensure that, where positive developments that would enhance the student experience were being proposed, that these were enabled in a way that best protected applicant and student interests. Recommendations would be submitted to a future meeting of EdCom. Ms Swallow and the group were thanked for the work that they continued to conduct in this area.

46. Annual report on the operation of Faculty Education Committees

- 46.1. Received – a report on the operation of Faculty Education Committees in the 2022-23 academic session at EDCOM 4-05 (23-24) prepared by the Assistant Secretary, which was commended by the Chair and approved.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

47. Approval of new programmes of study

- 47.1. Approved – the new programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 4-06 (23-24).

48. Minutes of subcommittees and working groups

- 48.1. Approved – the minutes of the 27 September 2023 meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee at EDCOM 4-07 (23-24).

49. Any other business

- 49.1. The Chair noted that work was being undertaken related to teaching-only contracts, and that further updates would be submitted to a future meeting of EdCom.

50. Date of the next meeting

- 50.1. EdCom's remaining meetings for the 2023-24 academic year are scheduled for:
- Thursday, 1 February 2024, 14.00 - 16:30
 - Thursday, 25 April 2024, 14:00 - 16:30
 - Thursday, 27 June 2024, 14.00 - 16:30
 - Thursday 25 July 2024, 14:00 - 16:30

Ashley Doolan
December 2023