



Education Committee

7 February 2023

Confirmed Minutes

Present:

Professor Kathy Armour (Chair)

Dr Ali Abolfathi; Mr Hamza Ahmed; Professor Simon Banks; Ms Karen Barnard; Dr Nicole Brown; Dr Parama Chaudhury; Ms Sarah Cowls; Professor Sally Day; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Ms June Hedges; Professor Arne Hofmann; Ms Harriet Israel; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva; Dr Margaret Mayston; Ms Mary McHarg; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Mary Richardson; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Professor Bill Sillar; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Olga Thomas; Ms Lizzie Vinton; Dr Nalini Vittal; Professor Nicola Walshe; Ms Julia Wojciechowska and Dr Kathryn Woods

In attendance: Ms Evi Katsapi (for Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce), Ms Sarah Henderson, Ms Hannah Swallow and Mr Rob Traynor (Interim Secretary).

Apologies: Mr Ian Davis; Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce, Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho; Dr Rachel King; Ms Seyi Osi and Professor Stan Zochowski.

Part I: Preliminary Business

58. Welcome and Announcements

58.1. The Chair announced that Dr Julie Evans had volunteered as an EdCom Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Lead for a pilot over the next two terms. The role will look to help improve EdCom's coverage of PGT matters. Dr Evans will report on progress during the Summer Term.

58.2. Ms Sarah Cowls, Executive Director of Student Services and Registrar informed EdCom of two new appointments in Academic Services to commence next term:

- Ashley Doolan as the Head of Academic Policy and Quality Standards
- Zak Liddell as the Director of Education Services

The Chair and members congratulated them on their appointments.

59. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

59.1. **Approved** – the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 December 2022 [EdCom Minutes 48-57, 2022-23] at EDCOM 5-01 (22-23).

60. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

60A Review of Education-Related Committees

60A.1 The new EdCom education-related sub-committees chairs were currently considering memberships and terms of reference, also discussed at the previous meeting (EdCom Minute 52, 06.12.2022). Formal arrangements would then be progressed with the

secretaries with the intention that meetings start soon. EdCom members, particularly the Academic Board (AB) elected members, were encouraged to join the new sub-committee memberships and should contact the EdCom Chair and Secretary if interested.

60B OfS Blended Learning Review and Compliance Concerns

60A.1 At the last meeting EdCom was informed of an Office for Students (OfS) review which UCL contributed to on a voluntary basis (EdCom Minute 56, 06.12.2022). The OfS had since written to the Provost outlining compliance concerns arising from the review, with an expectation that they be addressed. The Chair and the Registrar informed EdCom that they raised concerns with the OfS and stated that UCL's future participation in future voluntary pilots would be less likely if the outcomes were then used against institutions.

61. Chair's Action taken since the Last Meeting

61A Exam Board Mitigation for External Examiners' Non-Attendance (DPU)

61A.1 Received – the paper at EDCOM 5-02 (22-23) which outlined Chair's Action taken to approve mitigation taken by the Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) Board of Examiners for non-attendance by an External Examiner, following the [Board of Examiners Emergency Procedures](#) (Academic Manual Chapter 4). The Chair was satisfied that the mitigating action was appropriate and in line with the UCL procedures. The DPU also provided additional information confirming that action was undertaken to address assessment practice concerns raised by the Internal Examiner, who had replaced the missing External Examiner.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

62. Teaching Excellence Framework Submission: UCL and the Students' Union

62.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-03 (22-23), the UCL and Students' Union (SU) Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submissions, introduced by Ms Lizzie Vinton, TEF Lead.

62.2. The UCL and SU TEF submissions were completed and submitted to the OfS by the deadline (24 January 2023). The Chair thanked Ms Vinton and all the contributors for their hard work in producing the thorough submission, which captured UCL's extensive provision, strategy and future plans. The Chair also thanked the SU officers for the separate student submission, which was a fair and appropriate document, but also critical too. The substantive collaborative work undertaken was an example of good practice in itself. The SU officers also thanked Ms Vinton and her team for their support.

62.3. EdCom also noted that Ms Vinton would continue her secondment in the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience - VPESE) office to work on other projects.

63. UCL Education Strategy Update: Project One, Phase One (Developing an Education Framework)

63.1. Received - the discussion paper at EDCOM 5-04 (22-23) introduced by the Chair. The paper summarised the findings of the Phase One consultations on developing an Education Framework for UCL's future education provision. It drew on earlier EdCom discussions, reported the findings of the external consultations by NOUS and proposed next steps.

63.2. The following comments were noted on the paper:

- a) It was important to ensure that UCL policies and strategies worked for postgraduate taught (PGT) students. A significant minority studied at UCL for longer than one year, including students on part/time or Flexible Modular Programmes and some studying by blended distance learning. It was also important to consider student demographics and ethnicity. It was agreed to ask people to be clear on which student groups they were referring to in their responses.
- b) Transforming assessment practice would be critical, with open and honest dialogue required to ensure that it was fit for purpose and manageable for staff. It was also important to frame the discussion to ensure that creative suggestions for assessment changes were considered alongside constraints. It was agreed that providing greater opportunities for more in depth, larger pieces of work rather than many smaller assessments, would help reduce staff marking and administration, and ease student work-loads. Early use of formative assessment would help students prepare.
- c) Whilst many students fed back that they did not receive the academic support required, it was necessary to be mindful of what staff were able to provide and the impact on workloads. The question of how academic support and personal tutoring could be improved was important, as was how UCL could ensure accessibility for all students. This required consideration alongside other wellbeing support provision.
- d) It was suggested that whilst the paper asked the right questions, they should be expanded on to enable broader discussion. The document was on the right lines but it was important to draw out what was excellent about UCL education.

63.3. EdCom also noted the four high-level principles which were intended to inform the Education Framework for the Future and act as a useful starting point for institutional discussion:

Education at UCL is/will be:

1. Research-led and intellectually challenging;
2. Impactful and rewarding for students and staff;
3. Values-led to meet the needs of individuals and societies;
4. Connected and collaborative in its design, delivery and orientation.

63.4. Considerable work had been undertaken to develop the principles and there was general agreement they were on the right lines. However, it was suggested that some detail from previous versions had been lost, for instance the valuable affirmation that UCL research and education should be of equal standing and complementary to each other. The terms “research-led” and “values-led” also required further articulation as they could be understood differently across UCL, and potentially pull the principles in different directions. There could also be confusion between what was meant by institutional values and more specific values, such as those of professional accreditation bodies. The principles should thus be expanded to ensure clarity. Conversely, other members favoured more succinct principles and felt that “research-led” would be widely understood to mean expertise-led and relating to the latest developments in the field.

63.5. It was important that people were given the opportunity to flesh out the principles themselves in their responses, and to also comment on whether “research-led” and “values-led” were the right terms. Providing prompts in the document would be helpful. It was suggested that the revised paper be discussed at town hall events, including for professional services staff, as well as by Faculty Education Committees. Providing practical ideas for what principles might

mean in different contexts would also help understanding of the implications. This could also help identify good ideas and innovations and encourage collaboration across UCL.

- 63.6. **Agreed:** that the paper should be summarised into a shorter document with more challenging questions to stimulate discussions across UCL. The paper should also include some commentary and explanation of key terms to aid understanding. It should be discussed at town halls and circulated to different groups, faculties and departments. The paper should also provide opportunities for people to consider the implications for their programmes and lifelong learning.

Action: the Chair and Sally Mackenzie to note and take forward.

64. Student Academic Representation Governance And Policy

- 64.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-05 (22-23) introduced by Dr Kathryn Woods, Pro-Vice-Provost (Student Academic Engagement). EdCom's approval was sought for changes to student academic representation governance and policy, as linked to the establishment of the new Student-Staff Partnership Sub-Committee (SSPC), and to support ongoing enhancement of student academic representation at UCL. The proposals were discussed with key stakeholders including the EdCom Chair, Registrar and the SU. SSPC will be co-chaired by the SU Education Officer.
- 64.2. EdCom noted that student academic representation had been under the remit of Quality Review Sub-Committee (QRSC), which was now stood down. In order to better reflect the new EdCom sub-committee structure, it was proposed that SSPC have oversight of student academic representation. Updates were also required for the next iteration of the Academic Manual (particularly Chapter 9, sections 6 and 7) for the 2023-24 academic year. It was further proposed that SSPC review student academic representation governance and policy, as set out in the Academic Manual, to ensure it was in line with current governance and quality review mechanisms.
- 64.3. **Approved:** – the proposals at EDCOM 5-05 (22-23) for SSPC oversight of student academic representation governance and policy and to update the Academic Manual as appropriate. SSPC to also review student academic representation and report back to EdCom.

Action: Dr Kathryn Woods to note and take forward.

65. Postgraduate Taught Survey Results

- 65.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-06 (22-23) introduced by the Chair and Professor Parama Chaudhury, Pro-Vice-Provost (Student Academic Experience), on behalf of Ms Sally Mackenzie who was unable to attend the meeting. The paper presented the results of the PGT survey pilot 2022 conducted by the OfS, including comparisons with other surveys, departmental data and actions taken in response. The report will also be submitted to the University Management Committee (UMC).
- 65.2. The survey had similar questions to the new version of the National Student Survey (NSS) for undergraduate (UG) students and would enable greater comparison. However it did not have free text questions, which were very useful in providing additional insight to quantitative data and a request for that was fed back to the OfS. The survey was conducted during Term

3 2021-22, though the data was not released by the OfS until November, which delayed analysis and circulation. Nonetheless work on possible actions arising from the data was underway with faculty education teams.

- 65.3. The survey's overall results were positive with a response rate above the sector average. The highest scoring questions were for learning resources and for the course encouraging critical thinking (above 90%), whilst the lowest scoring questions were for assessment feedback, course organisation and opportunities to work with peers (below 80%). Departmental data indicated that there was greater dissatisfaction on larger programmes (i.e. above one hundred students) and action was underway to address this with faculties.
- 65.4. The OfS PGT survey would likely replace the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), though there was frustration that this was not yet confirmed. The timing would be especially important for response rates and data usefulness, with a suggestion that running it after dissertation submissions would produce the most valuable feedback. It was also suggested that the data was considered in the round and used constructively to help programmes and departments identify challenges and improve provision.

66. Personal Tutoring Review

- 66.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-07 (22-23) introduced by the Pro-Vice-Provost (Student Academic Engagement), sought EdCom approval for a proposed review of personal tutoring and the establishment of a Personal Tutor Review Steering Committee (PTRSG). The paper also proposed timings for the review and for a report to be considered by EdCom. Dr Woods thanked colleagues involved in setting up the review and PTRSG and Dr Peter Fitch, the UCL Arena lead on personal tutoring, was proposed as Co-chair of the group.
- 66.2. EdCom members were positive about the review, although it was suggested that it was important to clarify expectations and to differentiate the personal tutor role, with a focus on academic advice and guidance, from wellbeing provision and support, such as Student Advisors. With higher student numbers, the previous all-encompassing nature of the role was no longer appropriate or possible in many cases.
- 66.3. It was suggested that the review focus on the student information available for personal tutors which was fragmented and time consuming to access. This particularly frustrated staff who had performed similar roles at other institutions, where this information was often readily available. It was suggested that a special personal tutor dashboard with relevant information be developed to support the work.
- 66.4. It was further suggested that the review examine personal tutor support and training and consider how the role could provide career advice and professional development, often varied between subjects and departments. The review should also consider current practices, for example the expectation that students meet the personal tutor in the first week when they were busy with induction activities. The review should also consider how the role intersects with other support, such as student advisors and peer mentoring.

66.5. **Approved:** – the proposals at EDCOM 5-07 (22-23) for a personal tutoring review and establishment of the PTRSG, with a report and recommendations to be considered at the June and July EdCom meetings.

Action: Action: Dr Kathryn Woods to note and take forward.

67. Student Protection Plan 2023-24

67.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 5-08 (22-23) introduced by Ms Hannah Swallow, Compliance Manager and Ms Sarah Henderson, Senior Compliance Officer, Student and Registry Services. EdCom was asked to approve a new version of the Student Protection Plan, required by the OfS as part of UCL’s registration responsibilities.

67.2. EdCom noted that the updated plan, which was more student focused, was created by the SRS Compliance team with guidance from Legal Services to ensure OfS compliance. The SU had also provided feedback and work was undertaken with student representatives.

67.3. Approved – Paper EDCOM 5-08 (22-23), the Student Protection Plan 2023-34.

68. OfSTED Review of UCL Degree Apprenticeship Provision

68.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 5-09 (22-23) introduced by Professor Norbert Pachler, Pro-Vice-Provost (Quality and Standards) and Chair of the Degree Apprenticeships Steering Group (DASG). The paper presented the OfSTED report on its review of UCL degree apprenticeship provision, conducted in November 2022. The OfSTED report was marked as confidential and is available on request from the Interim Secretary.

68.2. The report was positive overall and OfSTED deemed that UCL had made reasonable progress on student safety, providing an effective curriculum, training entitlement and learning resources. UCL was asked to focus on strengthening its data infrastructure and quality assurance mechanisms for the provision and to provide more input for British values. It was suggested to make it clear to departments providing the provision of the need for good auditing and that this should be understood before programmes were introduced.

68.3. The DASG was developing an action plan to focus on the report’s findings, to be submitted to a later meeting. The DASG was also working with UCL Arena to ensure that the right quality reports were prepared for management to ensure effective oversight of the provision. UCL could expect a full OfSTED inspection within eighteen months.

69. Suspensions of Regulations Annual Report

69.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-10 (22-23) introduced by the Interim Secretary. The report summarised the requests for suspensions of regulations (SoRs) and other regulatory decisions which required higher approval by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience). The UG and PGT requests were reported to EdCom during the 2021-22 academic session, with consideration and approval of the cases delegated to senior Academic Services colleagues.

69.2. EdCom was informed that 226 requests for higher approval were received overall last session, reduced by 19% on 2020-21. The highest numbers of requests were for Material

Irregularities (MI) and Late Extenuating Circumstances (LEC), affected by the COVID 19 pandemic and the return to campus. The Student Support Framework introduced for the current year should help to reduce the number of LEC requests in future.

- 69.3. EdCom was asked to consider how the report might inform on-going reviews of the academic regulations and whether there was further scope for additional decision-making to be delegated to faculty or departmental level. It was difficult to suggest obvious potential areas to do so this year due to the overall decline in higher approval requests and the variability of the reasons for SoR requests.
- 69.4. The high number (11) of UG SoR requests for exceeding or not meeting programme credit thresholds was concerning and it was not clear how this was possible on the Portico student records system. This was likely due to the programmes' complexity, as diets would need to be simplified in order to allow automated processes to prevent students taking too many or not enough credits. Otherwise, more effective tracking of modules allowing UG and PGT participation would be required by departments to avoid this problem.
- 69.5. EdCom also noted that where students submitted extenuating circumstances requests after exam boards had met, chairs were only able to support any subsequent LEC requests, with the decision on whether to accept made by Academic Services. It was suggested that LEC requests might be reduced further if faculty tutors and exam board chairs were able to approve such requests, where compelling reasons were received.
- 69.6. It was suggested that the overall numbers of higher level approval requests was not unreasonable for an institution of UCL's size and was (proportionally) similar to other institutions. The overall downward trend in the number of requests was also encouraging. However, it would be helpful to consider higher approval requests in more detail to help EdCom's understanding and provide reassurance that academic standards were maintained.
Agreed: that a more detailed report on Term 1 2022-23 higher approval requests be submitted to EdCom.
Action: the Interim Secretary and the Registrar to take forward.

70. Faculty Teaching Committee Annual Report

Approved - the annual report on the proceedings of Faculty Teaching Committees (FTCs) during 2021-22 at EDCOM 5-11 (22-23) introduced by the Secretary (Interim).

- 70.1. EdCom noted that the FTCs, recently renamed "Faculty Education Committees," appeared to be working well overall and that the concerns raised last year, on student representation and ensuring coverage of the FTC terms of reference, were addressed.

71. Industrial Action Assessment Mitigation

- 71.1. Received – a late paper at EDCOM 5-14 (22-23) tabled by the Pro-Vice-Provost (Quality and Standards) which sought EdCom approval of the updated terms of reference and membership for the Examinations and Assessment Contingency Panel (EACP). The Panel would be reconvened to help safe-guard UCL academic standards and consider any issues arising in the light of continued industrial action by the University and College Union (UCU).

- 71.2. The EACP's key responsibilities were to ensure that students were not unfairly disadvantaged in assessment and that academic standards and integrity were maintained. The EACP would also coordinate exam board guidance and provide reassurance to students as necessary. The terms of reference were largely unchanged, as well as the powers delegated from EdCom to make any necessary changes to the Academic Manual (Chapter 6, Annex 6.6.2).
- 71.3. EdCom noted the importance of collecting accurate information on lost teaching in order to enable mitigation for any student complaints. Some concerns were reported about possible identification of staff when recording the teaching information, though this was not the intention of the information request. The template provided to departments was set up so that individuals would not be identified. It was further suggested that guidance was provided to Heads of Department on the areas of work returning staff should prioritise.
- 71.4. **Approved** - Paper EDCOM 5-11 (22-23), the updated EACP terms of reference.
Action: Professor Norbert Pachler to note

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

72. Approval of New Programmes of Study

- 72.1. Approved - the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 5-12 (22-23).

73. Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

- 73.1. Approved the minutes of the Degree Apprenticeships Steering Group (DASG) held on 21 November 2022 at EDCOM 5-13 (22-23).

74. Any Other Business

- 74.1. None received.

75. Dates of Next Meeting

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

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February 2023