



Education Committee

9 June 2022

Confirmed Minutes

Present:

Professor Kathy Armour (Chair)

Dr Ali Abolfathi; Ms Arifa Aminy; Professor Simon Banks; Ms Sarah Cowls; Mr Ian Davis; Professor Sally Day; Dr Julie Evans; Professor Alistair Greig; Ms June Hedges, Professor Arne Hofmann; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Ms Viktoria Makai; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva, Professor Chloe Marshall; Dr Helen Matthews; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson, Dr Bill Sillar; Professor Sam Smidt; Dr Hazel Smith; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Professor Olga Thomas; Ms Lizzie Vinton and Dr Stan Zochowski.

In attendance: Ms Evi Katsapi (for Ms Jo Fraser-Pearce), Ms Sally Mackenzie (Item 6), Ms Katie Price (Item 4), Ms Hannah Swallow (Item 10), Ms Alison Edridge (Secretary) and Mr Rob Traynor (Assistant Secretary).

Apologies: Mr Ayman Benmati; Dr Nicole Brown, Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce, Professor Jane Holder; Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho; Dr Rachel King; Mr Shivam Mulchandani.

Part I: Preliminary Business

75. Welcome and Announcements

75.1. The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting and reported on the following matters:

- Lizzie Vinton had been appointed as TEF Manager and would lead the development of UCL's TEF submission. As a result of the OfS consultation earlier in the year, the submission window would now be in early 2023 rather than autumn 2022.
- Professor Parama Chaudhary had been appointed as Pro-Vice-Provost (PVP) Student Academic Experience and would become a member of EdCom.
- The role of PVP Student Engagement was currently being advertised and would have a focus on personal tutoring and student wellbeing.
- There had been an OfS funding call for capital projects with a focus on STEM subjects, short courses and flexible provision. Consideration was being given to submitting a bid for a project on learning analytics.
- The reserved meeting of EdCom scheduled for Tuesday 19 July 2022 would need to go ahead due several important items of business that needed to be concluded prior to the start of the next academic session.

- NSS 2022 results would be released on 6 July 2022 and would be reported to the July 2022 meeting of EdCom. The Chair urged colleagues to review the results for their areas as quickly as possible. Deans would be asked to focus initially on targeting resource to address issues for the biggest, lowest-performing programmes.

76. Minutes of the Last Meeting

- 76.1. Approved – the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 April 2022 [EdCom Minutes 59-74, 2021-22] at EDCOM 5-01 (21-22).

77. Matters Arising from the Minutes

- 77.1. There were no matters arising.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

78. UCL Strategic Plan 2022-27 Consultation: Review of Education Feedback and Subsequent Feedback on Draft ‘Principles’

- 78.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 5-02 (21-22) providing a summary and detailed analysis of the emerging themes from community submissions received in response to the Education Priorities and Programmes discussion paper. The Chair reminded EdCom that decisions were not being taken at this stage and that the purpose of this discussion was to respond to the request from Academic Board for EdCom to consult on the draft paper and produce recommendations on an updated draft. The Chair noted that EdCom would wish to produce an Academic Impact Statement (staff and students) covering each component of the proposals separately and that this would be done in the next phase of work when the agreed proposals were specified into more detailed projects with outcomes for consideration.

- 78.2. The following points arising from the feedback were discussed:

- The feedback had indicated that there was an assumption that the proposed frameworks would be constraining. The Chair noted that frameworks were intended to be broad and enabling structures that made it easier for staff to do their jobs, and that further work would be required to communicate this intention.
- In relation to the proposed creation of a new Higher Education Development and Support (HEDS) institute, there had been a suggestion for a pedagogical helpdesk to provide teaching staff with practical immediate support. The Chair noted that next term she was planning to trial micro CPD sessions of 90 seconds each recognising that staff had limited time to engage. This would enable staff to quickly establish what was relevant to them and access more detailed content if they were interested in exploring a topic in greater depth. There would be an initial focus on assessment in these sessions.

- There was strong support to bring Arena and Careers together into the new HEDS institute. Feedback indicated that the integration of skills support for students within HEDS would need further consideration and appropriate phasing of this work would be needed.
- There was a need to better explain what semesterisation would mean in practice, for example, that semesters would not cut across holidays. Feedback from students indicated that they did not have strong views about how the year should be structured but wanted clear information in advance so that they could make informed decisions and they did want teaching and assessment to be brought closer together. Whilst there was a plan for an institutional framework, it would need to be flexible and accommodate the needs of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, as well programmes that needed to operate slightly differently. It was agreed that examples to illustrate what the academic year could look like would be useful, and that we should draw on examples from other top universities around the world too.
- Some members raised concerns about moving away from end of year assessments to end of semester assessments and that this might result in students only retaining what they had learnt for a short period of time. Further consideration of programme design and linkages and progression through modules would therefore be important. It was noted that the funding model would likely be changing with the proposed introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and there would be a funding and logistical risk to there being a long period between teaching and assessment.
- Student representatives noted that students currently had a large number of assessments, and that feedback was often not received on these in time for subsequent modules. They wanted to be sure that end of semester assessments would address workload challenges. The Chair clarified that the proposals would result in more time being built in for staff to undertake marking before teaching started so that staff would no longer be teaching term 2 whilst marking term 1 assessments as was currently happening.
- It was queried where extra-curricular activities would fit within the proposed structure. EdCom was informed that work was being undertaken with the Students' Union on how co-curricular activities could be supported and funded. Consideration would need to be given to whether some of these should be built into the curriculum via the programme architecture project.
- It was noted that assessment had implications for both the programme architecture and academic year structure projects and was a significant pain point for staff and students. It was queried whether there should be a separate project focusing on assessment. The Chair suggested that assessment should be a product arising from the proposals rather than driving them, but that the need to design-in better structures for assessment and feedback was a key consideration.
- The feasibility of offering part-time undergraduate programmes in the future was discussed. The complexity of doing so would need to be balanced with the direction of travel for funding and it would therefore be prudent to put

frameworks in place that would be sufficiently flexible to enable this in the future.

- The education components of the strategy were focused on taught provision although there appeared to be a lack of clarity in the feedback about the positioning of postgraduate research (PGR) provision and it had been suggested that this was currently a gap. It was noted that currently PGR students fall clearly into the RIGE portfolio, although there was some concern that they do not get the same level of attention as taught provision with regards to systems and support. It was noted that responsibility for the doctoral student experience sat with the Doctoral School and Research Degrees Committee rather EdCom. The Chair would be discussing the concerns raised with the Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement).

78.3. The Chair summarised the feedback received to date on the draft principles for education, which had been circulated via Faculty Tutors, Vice-Deans Education and the Students' Union for discussion. Overall, there was broad agreement with the draft principles. The following points had been identified for further consideration:

- Clarity would be needed about what is meant by academic excellence and what is special about what UCL offers. This would need to be evidenced.
- There was not enough 'joy' reflected in the principles and innovation was also missing.
- There was a suggestion that education should be reflected in the principles as a transformative and inspirational experience.
- The inclusive curriculum health check already existed but was not widely used.
- The principles did not appear to cover the student experience holistically.
- Some feedback had suggested that the principles should be respectful of staff workload and work-life balance, but it was concerning that this feedback did not mention students.
- For Principle 3, there had been concerns raised about what was meant by student partnership. For example, feedback from one faculty had suggested that students should not be seen as equal partners. This did not recognise that whilst staff and students brought different things to the partnership, their importance could and should be seen to have equal value. There was a tension between students being seen as consumers and as partners. However, this dual relationship did not take away from the expertise that students brought to UCL's education through their experience of learning.
- UCL as a global university, global citizenship and internationalisation were missing. Internationalisation was important to UCL's education and it was suggested that there should be more commitment to it within the principles.

78.4. EdCom agreed that the following should be captured in the report from EdCom to Academic Board regarding the Education Priorities and Programmes discussion paper and the feedback received via the consultation:

- There has been good engagement from the UCL community and useful feedback received. Several discussions have taken place at EdCom, which has agreed that the benefits and disadvantages for staff and students of each project should be clearly identified in the next phase when they are specified in more detail.
- Sufficient agreement has been established through the consultation and feedback for a project to review the structure of the academic year.
- There should be a project on aspirational principles of teaching and learning at UCL.
- There is broad support to bring together staff development and careers within one unit. The integration of student skills development will require further consideration and this project should therefore be undertaken in phases.
- There is significant work to be done to develop a programme architecture framework. Any framework will need to be sufficiently enabling to ensure it can be applied flexibly and appropriately at a local level.
- The consultation has indicated some concern about a move to centralisation and to impose rigid one-size-fits-all structures. The next stages of development should clarify that the emphasis is on enabling and supporting staff aspirations and student learning, and that we need to retain the best of what we do currently. Offering benefits to staff and students and reducing pain points will be the key driver of all projects.
- Assessment and student wellbeing will need to be more explicitly addressed in the projects. Both require further consideration in the next phase.
- There are structural issues that make equality, diversity, inclusion (EDI) and wellbeing problematic for students and staff, which need to be addressed, and this is a major aim of two of the projects.
- Implications for student support, infrastructure and resources are addressed in the Enablers paper. It would be helpful to emphasise the relationship with that paper as well as ensuring that this is sufficiently captured directly within the Education Priorities and Programmes paper.
- It will be important to ensure appropriate engagement of staff at all levels in the management and governance of projects. As well as staff who are members of EdCom and Academic Board, this should include more junior members of academic staff, students and professional services staff.
- Engagement with students and effective communications with staff and students must be strongly embedded throughout the next phases of work.
- The references to teaching, learning and assessment are narrow in scope and should be broadened to education to encompass a focus on the student experience.
- Teaching should be seen as an academic activity and the divide between and disparity for staff on different types of contracts with some not covered by Statute 18 should be addressed.
- Feedback from the consultation has identified a gap with regards to governance and oversight of the PGR student experience and EdCom recommends that this be reviewed.

- There was agreement that the Education Priorities and Programmes paper should not be rewritten. Instead, EdCom recommends that the next phase of scoping sets out more detailed project plans and options, which might include the use of working groups to focus on specific areas of concern. Detailed feedback received through the consultation process to date would be considered further during the next phase. It would be important to communicate this to colleagues who had provided contributions through the consultation process, as well as to Academic Board.

79. Report from the Degree Outcomes Steering Group

- 79.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 5-03 (21-22) containing the first report from the Degree Outcomes Steering Group established by EdCom to investigate the possible causes of an increase in the proportion of First class degrees and to propose potential solutions to return attainment to pre-pandemic levels. The paper included a summary of the main discussions of the Steering Group and recommendations for next steps. The Chair noted that EdCom had responsibility for academic standards and should be able to provide a credible explanation for the current position and actions that were being taken to address it.
- 79.2. The proportion of Firsts awarded had generally increased across the sector since 2010-11. However, in 2020-21, the proportion of Firsts awarded at UCL was 61% which placed it second highest amongst 144 institutions in England and 23rd in the rate of unexplained Firsts according to modelling undertaken by the Office for Students (OfS). Within the Russell Group, UCL had awarded the highest proportion of Firsts alongside Imperial. Whilst the proportion of Firsts at UCL had been affected by the no detriment classification rules in 2019-20 and 2020-21, UCL had been above the Russell Group (RG) benchmark prior to the pandemic despite entry requirements being similar to other RG institutions. A query was raised as to the validity of the entry data used in the report and whether this related to what was advertised or actual entry qualifications. It was clarified that this was not intended to be an exact measure but to illustrate that UCL's entry requirements were comparable with other RG institutions so this would not explain the relatively higher proportion of Firsts.
- 79.3. A member reported analysis in their Faculty had shown that average marks had increased significantly and that this was linked to the types of assessment used in particular modules. It was suggested that Faculties and Departments should be provided with consistent and early access to module and subject level data along with information on the RG benchmarks at subject level to better understand where the issues were and where actions should be taken. It was noted that module level data was already available in Tableau via the Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) data. However, this did not currently include details of subject level RG benchmarks.
- 79.4. It was noted that further guidance on marking and moderation processes for staff would be beneficial in ensuring that final marks were a fair reflection of student achievement. It was noted that some institutions routinely used scaling to ensure

consistent outcomes over time, but that it would be preferable to ensure that marking practices were robust and outcomes transparent rather than resorting to an increased use of scaling to calibrate marks.

- 79.5. Approved – the recommendations in the paper at EDCOM 5-03 (21-22) with the initial focus on the recommendation for statistical analysis at module marks. It was agreed that the provision of comparator benchmarks for subject level data should be explored to support discussions at subject-level, and that further guidance for marking and moderation processes should be developed.

Action: Professor Norbert Pachler (Chair of Degree Outcomes Steering Group) to discuss the provision of comparator data with Planning.

Action: Professor Sam Smidt (Director of Arena Centre) to consider the development of further marking and moderation guidance.

80. Revised Approach to Module and Programme Evaluation

- 80.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 5-04 (21-22) which proposed replacing the existing requirement for module evaluation questionnaires at the end of each module, with a process of continuous dialogue between teaching staff and students throughout the module. In addition, an annual Programme Evaluation survey would be introduced replacing the current Student Experience Survey. Support for staff receiving poor evaluations would be provided locally or by Arena. It was emphasised that the proposals place a strong emphasis on professionalism and productive dialogue between staff and their students.
- 80.2. The Chair noted that the proposed approach would be introduced from 2022-23 and was intended to address issues raised by students about modules in real time. There would be an expectation of brief pulse surveys at least three to four times during a module, focusing on three questions to check students' understanding of what is being taught, how they will be assessed and whether they can access the learning resources. The intention was to generate immediate results to enable dialogue between the staff member and students and for changes to be made to support student learning before the end of the module. The results would be managed by the staff member within the module rather than being reported elsewhere. A member suggested that it would be useful for there to be a mechanism for module leaders to report changes that had been made to modules as a result of the surveys and the impact of the changes to provide oversight Faculty level, and this was agreed. If students had concerns about a staff member not running the surveys, it was confirmed that they would be able to raise this through the Staff Student Consultative Committee.
- 80.3. A member queried whether the three module survey questions were too basic. It was clarified that they were a starting point and that staff could adjust them or ask other questions as the module progressed. Staff would be able to use a tool of their choosing to administer the surveys but an online pulse tool was recommended which did not require any special equipment.

80.4. It was intended that the Programme Evaluation Survey would include details of the modules taken. It was noted that many modules were shared across programmes and that it could be a significant piece of work to ensure the right modules were included and the results disseminated to the relevant staff. EdCom was informed that dissemination of results would be managed in the same way as the current Student Experience Survey and that work would be undertaken to ensure module data could be pulled from SITS. The timing of the Programme Evaluation Survey was yet to be finalised but would likely be at the end of Term 2 for undergraduate students who were not taking the NSS and later for taught postgraduate students so that it could capture reflections on dissertation modules.

80.5. Approved - the paper at EDCOM 5-04 (21-22).

81. Review of Online Assessment Regulations

81.1. Received and approved – the paper at EDCOM 5-05 to establish a sub-group of ARQASC to review the regulations for online assessment taking account of experiences during the 2022 exam period, subject to the addition to the membership of a Departmental Teaching and Learning Manager (or equivalent).

82. Student Support Framework 2022-23

82.1. Received – the papers at EDCOM 5-06 (21-22) which set out the final version of the proposed Student Support Framework for implementation from 2022/23. EdCom was informed that work would be undertaken over the summer to communicate the new framework to staff and students.

82.2. It was noted that there had been a recent legal judgement on a case at the University of Bristol, which had been found to be negligent in not implementing its equivalent of UCL's Summary of Reasonable Adjustments (SORA) for a student. It was agreed that an addition should be made to the Student Support Framework to state that a student should contact the relevant Faculty Tutor if their SORA has not been implemented.

82.3. Approved - the papers at EdCom 5-06 (21-22) subject to the addition of an escalation route to the Faculty Tutor for students whose SORA has not been implemented.

83. Timetabling Policy 2022/23

83.1. This item was deferred to the next meeting.

84. Student Protection Plan

84.1. Received and approved – the paper at EDCOM 5-08 setting out a revised Student Protection Plan to align with the OfS template and legal advice. It was noted that further changes were planned for 2023-24 to make the document more student friendly.

85. Revised Office for Students Conditions of Registration for Quality and Standards

85.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 5-09 summarising changes to the OfS conditions of registration B1, B2, B4 and B5 that took effect from 1 May 2022. Condition B3 on student outcomes had been subject to a separate consultation alongside the TEF, the outcomes of which was expected in the summer. It was noted that the revised B conditions would be discussed in more detail at EdCom’s first meeting of 2022-23.

85.2. The changes were a sign that there would be increased regulatory scrutiny and intervention by the OfS. The addition of the word ‘credible’ with regards to the awards that institutions make in condition B5 was of concern to UCL given the significant increase in the proportion of Firsts particularly in the last 2 years. The recent announcement by the OfS of an investigation of specific providers to assess whether they were meeting the revised conditions was noted.

86. Office for Students Review of Written Assessment Policies

86.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 5-10 (21-22) which set out staff guidance for assessing the written communication of ideas for EdCom’s approval. This had been developed in response to an OfS review of policies and practices at a small number of providers regarding the degree of rigour in approaches to written assessment with a focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar. The paper also set out a draft Student Proofreading Policy which was currently being consulted on and was therefore not for approval at this stage.

86.2. A member queried whether the staff guidance should specify that students should be assessed on the use of UK English. It was clarified that the OfS was concerned with poor written English rather than UK English specifically so the focus should be on consistency.

86.3. Approved – the Staff Guidance for Assessing the Written Communication of Ideas at EDCOM 5-10 (21-22).

87. Flexible Education Update

87.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 5-11 (21-22) providing an overview of the work of the Flexible Education Task and Finish Group of ARQASC.

87.2. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group highlighted the following:

- The scope of flexible education being considered included credit-bearing short course, pre-sessional courses and summer schools as well as modular/flexible programmes.
- Clarity on what was meant by flexible education would be important in addressing issues currently experienced by students. Going forward, a shift to

considering flexible education in terms pace, place and mode of study would be helpful. Currently, there was inconsistency in how distance, online and blended provision were referred to across UCL.

- There was a need to establish clear definitions for student statuses and align these with entitlements and access available for different types of flexible students. It was noted that there may also be legal obligations with regards to student support and welfare and it was important that our frameworks and systems would ensure these were met.
- There was a need for a revised approach to how credit-bearing flexible education was costed and resourced.

87.3. In light of the importance of this activity, it was agreed that there should be a more detailed discussion at EdCom's first meeting of 2022-23.

88. Amendments to Academic Manual Chapter 10: Short Course Framework 2022-23

88.1. Received and approved – the paper at EDCOM (21-22) proposing changes to Academic Manual Chapter 10.

Part III: Other Matters for Approval or Information

89. Structural Changes to the Academic Manual 2022-23

89.1. Approved – the structural changes to the Academic Manual for 2022-23 at EDCOM 5-13 (21-22)

90. Amendments to Chapter 7: Programme and Module Approval and Amendment 2022-23

90.1. Approved – the amendments Chapter 7 of the Academic Manual at EDCOM 5-14 (21-22)

91. Report of Minor Amendments to the Academic Manual 2022-23

91.1. Approved – the minor amendments to the Academic Manual at EDCOM 5-15 (21-22)

92. Approval of New Programmes of Study

92.1. Approved – the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 5-16 (21-22).

93. Suspensions of Regulations Report

93.1. Approved - the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 5-17 (21-22)

94. Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

94.1. Approved – the minutes of ARQASC held on 20 January 2022 and 28 March 2022 at EDCOM 5-18 (21-22) and EDCOM 5-19 (21-22).

94.2. Approved – the minutes of PMAP held on 25 January 2022 at EDCOM 5-20 (21-22).

94.3. Approved – the minutes of QRSC held on 25 January 2022 at EDCOM 5-21 (21-22).

94.4. Approved – the minutes of the Degree Outcomes Steering Group held on 28 February 2022 and 4 April 2022 at EDCOM 5-22 (21-22) and EDCOM 5-23 (21-22).

95. Any other business

95.1. The Chair noted that the committees with responsibility for education were currently being reviewed in order to ensure that EdCom would receive the information it requires to discharge its responsibilities effectively. For example, there was currently no reporting line to EdCom with regards to reporting on commitments in the Access and Participation Plan. Proposals would be brought to EdCom in due course once further work had been undertaken.

96. Dates of Future Meetings

96.1. The final meeting of the 2021-22 academic session would take place on Tuesday 19 July 2022 at 14:00 - 16:30 on MS Teams.

Alison Edridge (Secretary) and Rob Traynor (Assistant Secretary)

Head of Academic Policy and Quality Assurance (Interim)

Academic Services

Email: a.edridge@ucl.ac.uk

21 June 2022