Education Committee

10 June 2021

Confirmed Minutes

Present:
Professor Deborah Gill (Chair)

Dr Ali Abolfathi, Dr Simon Banks; Mr Ayman Benmati; Professor Clare Brooks; Dr Nicole Brown; Ms Yasmeen Daoud; Mr Ian Davis; Professor Sally Day; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Ms Megan Gerrie; Professor Alistair Greig; Ms June Hedges; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Jane Holder; Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho; Dr Rachel King; 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 Joanne Moles (Minutes 71 and 72); Professor Simon Walker (Minute 71); Mr Grayson Jones (Minute 71), Professor Parama Chaudhury (Minute 74), Ms Fiona McClement (Minute 75); Mr Darren Payne (Minute 78) Mr Dan Derricott (Secretary) and Mr Rob Traynor (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms Wendy Appleby, Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce, Mr Jim Onyemenam and Mr Derfel Owen.

Part I: Preliminary Business

69.   Minutes of the Previous Meeting

69.1.   Approved – the Minutes of the previous EdCom meeting held on:

-   27 April 2021 [EdCom Minutes 54-68, 2020-21] at EDCOM 5-01 (20-21).

A query was raised on the Matters Arising section and following the meeting the minutes were checked and found to be correct. The error related to Paper 5-02 (20-21), see Minute 72 below.

70.   Matters Arising from the Minutes

70A   Teaching Operation Model and Academic Planning
[EdCom Minute 55c, 27.04.21]

70A.1 EdCom had previously discussed the [Teaching Operating Model](#) and plans for the wider re-opening of UCL in the next session. The Chair provided an update on the progress of the Operating Model and noted that UCL senior leadership groups continued to work on it. No substantive changes were anticipated and discussions continued on building resilience into the model.

70A.2 EdCom noted that it was important to balance student needs and wants with what was achievable. Other factors were being taken into consideration, such as Visa holders and how to accommodate students that were required to isolate or were in quarantine when arriving in the UK. The Government had recently announced an Autumn Contingency Planning and Guidance Reference Group which was conducting scenario testing, it was thus possible that the UCL decisions at the local level might need to be revisited. The Chair would provide a further update on the Teaching Operating Model at the next meeting.

70B   Module Registration – Targeted Support to Reduce Student Rejections
[EdCom Minute 56, 27.04.21]

70B.1 EdCom had approved the establishment of a Task Group to address the issues of student discontent on module choice. This was a major source of dissatisfaction for students, particularly the high number of rejections of student choices. The Director of Academic Services (AS) reported that the Task Group had met once and that AS officers would be meeting those departments with the highest numbers of module choice rejections to discuss whether this could be addressed. EdCom will be kept informed of progress.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

71.   Digital Assessment Project Update (Standing Agenda Item)

71.1.   The Head of Assessment Delivery and Platforms (AS) and the Academic Lead, UCL Arena provided EdCom with the regular update on the Digital Assessment Project (DAP).

71.2.   EdCom noted the following:
        a) The DAP was now a year old and was on course for meeting its aims and objectives. The project's work included a requirements gathering exercise and a high-level summative assessment journey to inform procurement, which resulted

      in a contract with the provider WiseFlow and the development of new platform AssessmentUCL for 2020-21.

b) AssessmentUCL had since successfully delivered 1017 exams and assessments delivered successfully to 48,000 students with 94% submission.

c) As of 17 May 2021, 1255 Exam Query Forms (EQF) had been received of which 579 were on technical failures. The highest number of EQFs concerned queries on exam paper questions, similar to previous years for in-person exams.

d) A number of the technical failure EQFs concerned uploading of the assessment, usually where students were too late.

e) The pilots had gone well and had tested the platform's capability for other non-examination forms of assessment. AssessmentUCL coped well with large and multiple files with flexible rubrics, which was well received by the Slade School of Fine Art and the Faculty of the Built Environment. Functionality for grade integration and feedback release was being tested with the Faculty of Laws and would be a key advantage of the system when rolled out across UCL.

f) The staff experience was positive with 50% of staff choosing to mark on the platform and few issues raised; this was a higher rate than expected. Considerable resources were available to support staff engagement, with six new posts being recruited to support on-boarding of departments to the platform for next year, as well as a new Digital Education team to support the work.

g) The Academic Steering Group was advising on this work and had met twice, considering issues on marking and moderation, the provision of exam feedback and visualising assessment plans. More work was required as staff became familiar with the platform and suggestions for improvements to marking would be made to WiseFlow. A consultation was also planned with staff and students to understand their experiences with new platform.

71.3. During the discussion, further details of the technical failures were provided and it was noted that few had turned out to be genuine failures, with the platform performing robustly. The majority involved students uploading their exam submissions too late. It was suggested that further consideration was given to the policy, communications and overall approach to examinations.

71.4. The Faculty of Engineering requested that a new functionality be added to the platform to enable automatic marking of complicated calculations. The Faculty noted that it had to run some assessments on Moodle instead this year as it was unable to do this on AssessmentUCL.

71.5. The Chair noted the major progress made in the last year in delivering the AssessmentUCL platform and thanked the Exams and project teams and the other staff involved. This was an incredible achievement which had required a great deal of work and skill.

71.6. The slides from the presentation were available on the EdCom MS Teams site and SharePoint.

72.   Exams Operating Model 2021-22

72.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-02 (20-21) introduced by Ms Joanne Moles, Head of Assessment Delivery and Platforms (AS), which concerned the broad Operating Model for centrally managed examinations 2021/22. This was previously discussed by EdCom (23 February 2021) and Academic Board (3 March 2021) and it was agreed that there would be no in-person centrally-managed, invigilated exams in 2021-22. Further detailed policy on the implementation of the agreed model would be brought to the next meeting.

72.2. An error was noted in the Section 2:1, final paragraph of the paper and a corrected version of the paper will be added to the EdCom Teams site and SharePoint.

72.3. EdCom was asked to approve the Operating Model for 2021/22 centrally managed exams to allow time for departments to plan accordingly and choose from three remote open book options:
    i.   24-hour open book
    ii.   Timed exams with all students sitting at the same time (BST)*
    iii.   24-hour window with timed element*
    *options two and three need to be mutually exclusive.

72.4. The paper further recommended that EdCom:
    a) adopt Options 1 and 2 (24-hour open book assessment and timed online exams); and
    b) establish a task and finish group of the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (ARQASC) to draft a regulatory framework for 24-hour exams.

    The paper also recommended that a clear approach for the upload window was adopted and consideration given to communication with the students.

72.5. A number of points were raised in the discussion:
    a) Summary of Reasonable Adjustment (SORA) –there were widespread concerns with the blanket 24 hours being given to students with SORAs on timed exams, reported from both staff and students, including some lead academic representatives. This included concerns around possible gaming by individual students and wider concerns that many students could receive an academic advantage through the extra time for timed exams. It was questioned whether all students with SORAs really needed the full 24 hours and whether appropriate reasonable adjustments dependent on their circumstances could be adopted. It was suggested that as AssessmentUCL capabilities were better understood, a more nuanced approach was possible.
    b) There was support for retaining 24-hour exams from the student representatives. Problems were noted with the reliability of eduroam in some halls of residence and that students taking exams at home required the longer timescales to complete exams due to factors such as caring responsibilities or

intermittent access to suitable study space. There was also support for providing study space on campus for exams, though it was noted some sort of invigilation would be required to prevent academic misconduct. However, this might lead to a return to face-to-face exams.

c) It was reported that 24-hour exams were a useful assessment method and viewed favourably in some departments, though there were concerns regarding a greater risk of collusion. Regulatory work would be needed on shorter assessments that sit between an exam and coursework. There was also a possibility that 24-hour assessments could in future be seen as take-home assessments and removed from the scope of centrally managed exams. The ARQASC Task and Finish Group would need to consider what were the basic principles of exams.

d) There was wide agreement that upload time should be built into the duration of exams to reduce confusion amongst students and subsequent EQFs.

72.6. **Agreed:** That a combination of Option 1 (24-hour exams) and Option 2 (Timed exams with all students sitting at the same time (BST)) be adopted as the examination Operating Model for 2021-22. Upload time should be added to the duration of the exam to ensure clarity.
Action: Joanne Moles to implement.

72.7. **Agreed:** That an ARQASC Task and Finish Group be established to draft a regulatory framework for 24-hour exams and to consider the other matters raised in the discussion, including a more nuanced approach to students with SORAs.
Action: Lizzie Vinton and Professor Norbert Pachler

73. Student Priorities for Education Report

73.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-03 (20-21) introduced by Mr Ayman Benmati, the Students' Union (SU) Education Officer. The report drew on over 400 minutes of Staff Student Consultative Committees (SSCCs) and considered the longer-term trends from the feedback received before and during the pandemic.

73.2. The Education Officer reported that students were most positive about teaching delivery, including several exceptional examples that translated well online. Access to learning resources through the pandemic was also largely favourable, with e-journals or virtual fieldwork positively received, as well access to lecture slides and notes in the same place as other resources. Students also appreciated collaborative learning opportunities such as small group teaching, use of break-out rooms, group chats and message boards, enabling questions and answers to solidify their learning.

73.3. Students were less enthused with the timing of assessment deadlines which often led to bunching with other modules. There were also concerns with the lack of clarity of the deadlines in earlier information. The report recommended that assessment deadlines were planned more coherently and staggered where possible. Students also requested greater clarity on marking criteria, with clear specifications and guidance on what was

required for each module. Timetabling too remained a concern with clashes, poor communications on changes and teaching scheduled for Wednesday afternoons hi-lighted in the report. Students would particularly like to see improvements where this impacted multiple core modules.

73.4. EdCom was asked to note particular recommendations from the report including the integration of assessment criteria into the Module Catalogue, the consideration of the criteria against learning objectives in the module approval process and the monitoring of assessment loads to ensure that they were equitable.

73.5. The EdCom discussion showed much agreement with the report and gratitude for the SU in bringing the matters to attention. Spreading out assessment was desirable but would be logistically challenging and some staff were concerned about the recommendation to reactivate the rule on four-week turnaround on marking assessments. This had proved very challenging in the pandemic due to the increase in coursework assessment and the use of Extenuating Circumstances (ECs) squeezing academic staff time. Staff wellbeing and workloads also needed to be taken into consideration.

73.6. The Education Officer was thanked for the comprehensive and insightful report and it was suggested that EdCom focus on three areas for the next session:
   a) Assessment - to continue to focus on the current work, with the Academic Steering Group for AssessmentUCL playing a key role and factoring in the work on ECs being undertaken by the current EdCom Task and Finish Group.
   b) Campus experience – to continue to work with the senior UCL groups exploring this to ensure that these areas are covered.
   c) Programme approval process – it was important to consider assessment criteria and learning objectives, but thought would also be required to how existing provision might be reviewed.

74. Black Asian And Minority Ethnic (BAME) Awarding Gap Report [EdCom Minute 59, 27.04.2021]

74.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-04 (20-21) introduced by Dr Julie Evans, Brain Sciences Faculty Tutor and Professor Parama Chaudhury. This was a more detailed report which followed on from consideration at the previous meeting of preliminary research on the effects of the No Detriment Policy (NDP) on the BAME awarding gap and the discussion on reducing this long term.

74.2. EdCom was informed that since the last meeting, further work was undertaken to examine the intersection between ethnicity and other factors, such as socio-economic status. There was still a narrowing of the gap, but nothing particularly new or stark to report. The report and detailed module data had been shared with Faculty Tutors and Vice-Deans (Education) via a dedicated Teams site and further exploration was needed locally to contextualise and understand the data. This would help teaching committees to identify and inform next steps.

74.3. The report concluded that at module level, changes to assessment types appeared to be the biggest driver for closing the gap, with more of an impact than the NDP. Faculties were asked to examine the data with their programme directors, to identify patterns and consider necessary actions to sustain the closing of the gap so far. The identified actions should be prioritised. It was also suggested that the faculty analysis was discussed at an early EdCom meeting next year.

74.4. EdCom noted that there would be a window of opportunity to change assessment patterns following Exam Boards. However, it was important to consider this alongside other policy changes, such as self-certification as well as the data from 2020-21 assessments to consider the impact of this year's NDP approaches. It was also suggested that anonymised marking, as well as marking practice and culture should be considered for any possible effect on student outcomes. For faculties with many modules, it was suggested to focus on the outlier modules.

74.5. **Agreed:** that faculties consider the BAME report data and any possible actions or changes to their assessment policy that might help to maintain this overall reduction in assessment. Faculties should report back to the first meeting of EdCom next session. **Action: Faculty Tutors and other relevant faculty officers**

75. Respect and Inclusion Module

75.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-05 (20-21) introduced by Ms Fiona McClement, Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), which outlined a proposal for a unified online training module to help improve student understanding of respect and inclusion at UCL. The proposed module was supported by the new Provost and the SU, and was recently endorsed by the Student Experience Committee (StEC). The module, to be taken pre-arrival, would be rolled out for 2021-22 and it was intended that work would then be undertaken to make it mandatory for new students from 2022-23.

75.2. The proposed module was favourably received by EdCom with support for the suggestion to work on regulatory provision and to consider the implications for postgraduate students next year, before it was made mandatory. It was noted that this would not just be for the regulations, but also the practicalities of implementation; for example, what would happen to students who did not take it up. It was also suggested that the opt-out provision (suggested by StEC to protect vulnerable students who might be triggered by the module content), would need careful thought to ensure that this did not create an easy get-out for other students who did not wish to take it. The Faculty of Laws offered to provide advice to the EDI on this.

75.3. **Approved:** The Respect and Inclusion@UCL module at Paper EDCOM 5-05 (20-21), for all new student starters in 2021-22. EdCom will also receive next session regulatory proposals to make completion of the module a condition of entry from 2022.

76.   Changes to Academic Manual 2021-22

76.1.   The Academic Regulations Manger informed EdCom that there were no major changes to the regulations this year; the papers rather showed a series of necessary amendments in response to feedback from committees and ARQASC.

76.2.   **Approved** - the paper at EDCOM 5-06a (20-21), which covered Academic Manual Chapter 1: Student Recruitment and Admissions.

76.3.   It was noted that amendments to Chapter 1 were also approved by the Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee (StRAFC) in June 2021. This included a new section related to applicant behaviour on social media and elsewhere once they had submitted their application.

76.4.   **Approved** - the paper at EDCOM 5-06ba (20-21). The paper covered the following chapters of the Academic Manual:

- Chapter 2: Qualifications and Credit Framework
- Chapter 3: Registration Framework for Taught Programmes
- Chapter 4: Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes

It was noted that this paper was re-issued from the first circulation of the agenda to include changes to Dual Registration outlined in Chapter 3.

76.5.   It was suggested that the dual registration changes, related to teacher training, might be extended further to encompass medical education and other areas.

76.6.   It was noted that the current approach to ECs was likely to change due to the difficulties with staff resources and workloads presented this year. It was not possible to develop this approach in time for the meeting as circumstances were still rather unclear with the pandemic. The current policy also still applied to postgraduate taught (PGT) students and needed to stay in place until the current cohort had completed their year of study.

76.7.   **Approved** - the paper at EDCOM 5-06c (20-21), which related to PGT Student Vacation periods. The paper proposed amendments to the regulations on PGT contact hours, personal study and vacation periods to bring UCL into line with common sector practice and to help students take up employment and internship opportunities.

77.   Academic Manual Chapter 7: Programme and Module Amendment Framework

77.1.   Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-07 (20-21), introduced by the Secretary. The paper outlined the amendments proposed to Academic Manual Chapter 7: Programme and Module Approval and Amendment Framework for 2021-22. The

paper had received prior consideration by members of both the Programme and Module Approval Panel (PMAP) and Research Degree Committee (RDC).

77.2. EdCom was informed that most of the policy changes were minor, the most notable being to strengthen the programme development phase, approved by EdCom in July 2020, which included requirements for interaction with the Arena Centre and Communication and Marketing (CAM). It was proposed to extend the requirements and the probation period from PGT programmes to cover all new programmes.

77.3. Although the EdCom discussion revealed general support for the changes to Chapter 7, there were significant concerns aired regarding the role of CAM, market research and on how it established whether there were markets for new programmes. Early CAM engagement was important to prevent programmes progressing where there was a lack of evidence of a market and longer-term to reduce the number of programmes with low recruitment.

77.4. However, there was some confusion as to what CAM provided, with one view that this was market analysis rather than research. It could not provide information on markets that did not yet exist, for example for innovative programme proposals dealing with technological innovations. Programme directors also often felt unsupported in receiving actual market research in their fields and there were concerns that novel and innovative programmes could be stopped if this was codified in the programme approval policy. Another view was that there was some confusion over the support provided for UCL East from CAM, with a perceived lack of clarity on whether what was provided was market research or the beginning of an ongoing process. It was suggested that greater discussion and committee scrutiny of the market research requirement was needed before EdCom approved a policy that extended the requirement to engage with CAM to all new programmes.

77.5. It was noted that PMAP had met many times this year with a high number of programmes seeking approval, and it had not been able to also engage in academic planning. The Quality Review Sub-Committee (QRSC) had suggested that those discussions should be held elsewhere with greater input from the Planning team and UCL Estates. It was suggested that PMAP, or another committee or group, should hold a policy focus meeting to consider these matters.

77.6. **Approved:** the paper at EDCOM 5-07 (20-21), which proposed amendments to Academic Manual Chapter 7: Programme and Module Approval and Amendment Framework for 2021-22. The sections relating to engagement with CAM were not approved and would require more thought to refine the engagement required and the support available from CAM, as part of a wider discussion on business planning. **Action:** The Secretary and PMAP officers to note.

78.   Academic Misconduct Procedure: Review and Amendments for 2021-22

78.1.   Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-08 (20-21), introduced by Professor Olga Thomas and Mr Darren Payne, Academic Services. The paper outlined proposed amendments to the Academic Misconduct procedures for 2021/22, made in response to staff feedback since the new procedures were first implemented in 2019/20. The paper was considered and recommended for EdCom approval by ARQASC.

78.2.   The paper's recommendations would help tighten and update the procedure and be included in the Student Casework Framework from 2021-22. This included recommendations expanding the investigatory vivas to also cover collusion in contract cheating cases and widening grounds for appeals. The paper also proposed that the Academic Misconduct Panel would submit an annual report to EdCom summarising its decisions made each year.

78.3.   During the discussion, an example of a live case was raised, whereby students had reported an incident of contract cheating. An exam paper was shared in a student WhatsApp group and placed on a contract cheating website, which then produced answers to the questions within 30 minutes. This potentially involved many students who were now being investigated by the faculty concerned for contract cheating and collusion. There was concern that this problem may be more widespread than previously realised. It was suggested that EdCom might need to consider whether this is a more wide-spread problem and if the regulatory framework was fit-for-purpose in handling the challenges brought about by these new companies and websites taking advantage of moves to online learning in higher education. This also suggested a need for improved assessment design to make cheating more difficult and easier to identify.

78.4.   **Approved:** the paper at EDCOM 5-08 (20-21), amendments to the Academic Misconduct Procedure.
Action: Professor Olga Thomas and Mr Darren Payne to note

78.5.   **Approved:** that two groups are set up, one to focus on assessment design, led by the Academic Steering Group and the other, drawing volunteers from EdCom and ARQASC, along with the Academic Misconduct Panel, to consider the policy and regulations.
Action: EdCom Officers

Secretary's Note: Following the meeting and further discussion, it was agreed that a single ARQASC sub-group would be set up to consider assessment design and policy and regulations, including the regulatory framework for 24-hour exams and students with SORAs (as outlined in Minute 72.7 above).

79. **Changes to Attendance-Related Regulations (Student Attendance Policy 2021-22)**

79.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-09 (20-21), introduced by Ms Lizzie Vinton, Academic Regulations Manager. The paper outlined the changes to Academic Manual required following EdCom's approval at its February meeting (EdCom Minute 45, 27.02.2021) of the Student Attendance Policy for 2021-22. The paper was considered by ARQASC who recommended EdCom approval following suggestions for changes to the draft.

79.2. **Approved:** the paper at EDCOM 5-09 (20-21), Changes to Attendance-Related regulations.

80. **Proposed Module Evaluation Questionnaire Policy**

80.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 5-10 (20-21), introduced by the Secretary. The paper proposed adding a new section on Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) to Academic Manual Chapter 9: Quality Review Framework.

80.2. The proposal had been considered by both ARQASC and QRSC who were both supportive of the MEQ policy. The ARQASC minor clarifications were factored into the paper, whilst the QRSC suggestions would be added to the published version. These related to the applicability to non-modular programmes (a similar and equivalent approach would be recommended) and clarification that closing the feedback loop meant closing with students generally, not specifically the same students who had completed the MEQ.

80.3. **Approved:** the paper at EDCOM 5-10 (20-21), the MEQ section to be added to the Academic Manual Chapter 9: Quality Review Framework.
Action: The Secretary and EdCom officers

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

81. **Academic Communication Centre**

81.1. Noted - the Academic Communication Centre paper at EDCOM 5-11 (20-21).

82. **Approval of New Programmes of Study**

82.1. Approved - the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 5-12 (20-21).

83.   Approval of New Academic Partnerships

83.1.   Approved - the new academic partnerships recommended by the Academic Partnerships Review Group (APRG) at EDCOM 5-13 (20-21).

84.   Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

84.1.   Approved the minutes of ARQASC held on 12 April 2021 at EDCOM 5-14 (20-21).

84.2.   Approved the minutes of PMAP held on 25 March 2021 at EDCOM 5-15 (20-21).

84.3.   Approved the minutes of the Academic Partnerships Review Group held on 9 February 2021 at EDCOM 5-16 (20-21).

84.4.   Approved the minutes of the Degree Apprenticeships Steering Group (DASG) held on 23 October 2020 at EDCOM 5-17 (20-21).

84.5.   Approved the minutes of the DASG held on 15 January 2021 at EDCOM 5-18 (20-21).

84.6.   Approved the Minutes of the DASG held on 22 February 2021 at EDCOM 5-19 (20-21).

84.7.   Approved the Minutes of the DASG held on 23 March 2021 at EDCOM 5-20 (20-21).

85.   Suspensions of Regulations

85.1.   Approved – the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 5-21 (20-21).

86.   Any Other Business

86.1.   Future Working of EdCom – it was noted that Academic Board (AB) had recently discussed proposals for a University Management Committee (UMC) and how this would relate to EdCom and to StEC.

86.2.   **Agreed:** that EdCom members who were also members of AB, discuss this further with the Chair to explore the proposals and inform the Provost's office thinking on how education can be dealt with appropriately, but without duplication of work. It was also suggested that other EdCom members, but not on AB, who had expertise in policy and communications also attend.
Action: The Chair and Secretary

87.   Dates of Next Meeting

87.1.   The date of the final EdCom meeting of 2020-21 is:

- RESERVED MEETING Thursday 22 July 2021 10.30am

Meetings to be held on MS Teams.

Dan Derricott
EdCom Secretary

Head of Academic Policy and Quality Assurance & Deputy Director of Academic Services
 Academic Services [email: dan.derricott@ucl.ac.uk}

6 July 2021