



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

11 June 2019

MINUTES

Present:

Professor Anthony Smith (Chair);

Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Simon Banks; Mr Ian Davis; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Professor Deborah Gill; Ms June Hedges; Dr Arne Hofmann; Dr Sandra Leaton Gray; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Helen Matthews; Professor Tim McHugh; Mr Derfel Owen; Professor Norbert Pachler; Dr Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Sam Smidt; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Eva Sorensen; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Ms Olga Thomas.

In attendance: Ms Lizzie Vinton (Secretary); Professor Piet Eeckhout for item 73; Mr Nick McGhee for item 74; Ms Bella Malins for item 75; Ms Anniina Wikman for items 76 and 77 and Mr Darren Payne for item 80.

Apologies were received from: Ms Rothna Akhtar; Dr Tracey Allen; Dr Mike Porter and Mr Saddiqur Rahman.

Key to abbreviations

AC	Academic Committee
APRG	Academic Partnerships Review Group
ARQASC	Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub Committee
EdCom	Education Committee
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IOE	Institute of Education
IQR	Internal Quality Review
LLM	Master of Laws
LSA	Late Summer Assessment
MAPS	Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences
MPH	Master of Public Health
NSS	National Student Survey
OIA	Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
OVPESA	Office of the Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs)
PMAP	Programme and Module Approval Panel
PTES	Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey
QRSC	Quality Review Sub Committee
SMT	(UCL) Senior Management Team
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework

PART I: PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

71 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

71.1 **Approved** – the minutes of the meeting held 25 April 2019 [*EdCom Minutes 55-70 (18-19)*].

72 CHAIR'S ACTION TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING

72A UCL Student Reference Policy

72A.1 **Noted** – the Student Reference Policy at EDCOM 5-01 (18-19) had been updated in order to ensure GDPR compliance. The in-session changes to the Academic Manual had been agreed by Chair's Action so that the revised policy could be shared with departments immediately.

PART II: MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

73 LAWS LLM REVIEW: PROPOSED NEW PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

- 73.1 **Received** – the proposals at EDCOM 5-02 (18-19) presented by the Dean of the Faculty of Laws.
- 73.2 The Faculty of Laws had undertaken a major review of its Masters provision, which had included extensive consultation with current students, recent alumni, recruiters and faculty staff. In order to facilitate a new programme structure, the Faculty wished to seek endorsement both for the direction of travel and for two specific regulatory variations which required EdCom's approval:
- A shorter programme duration of ten months, which would give students the opportunity to take up summer internships with some of London's most prestigious law firms, and
 - The ability to include 'half credits' e.g. modules with a 22.5 credit value. This would allow the dissertation to be reduced from 60 to 45 credits (in line with changes to UCL policy in 2018-19), and the taught modules to be extended from 15/30 credits to 22.5/45 credits, allowing subjects to be studied in more depth.
- 73.3 EdCom welcomed the move to enhance students' employability and endorsed the direction of travel. The regulatory variations were approved in principle and it was noted that the Faculty would need to work with ARQASC to amend the Qualifications and Credit Framework for the 2020-21 academic session.

Action: Academic Regulations Manager

74 STUDENT CASEWORK ANNUAL REPORT

- 74.1 **Received** – the annual report for 2018 at EDCOM 5-03 (18-19) presented by the Head of Governance.
- 74.2 **Noted** – There had been an increase in the number of formal complaints from 120 in 2017 to 178 in 2018. 189 complaints were closed and 141 Completion of Procedures and Outcome Letters were issued, which had also addressed the backlog of 'legacy cases' noted in the previous two years' reports. The number of complaints progressing to the OIA was higher than UCL's institutional benchmark. It was hoped that the recent proposals to implement an internally-chaired appeals stage would reduce this number. There was a significant number of complaints relating directly and indirectly to industrial action, and the recent changes in regulations appeared to have led more students to compare their own experiences with those of other students.
- 74.3 EdCom discussed the variations by faculty. It was noted that the data were based on total cases, not a proportion of cases. The Casework Team noted that, while the latter might reduce the appearance of outliers, the faculty rankings would still be very similar. EdCom requested that relative figures be included in future reports together with a breakdown of by faculty cases upheld, partially upheld etc.

Action: Head of Governance

75 HERE TO SUCCEED: POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER

- 75.1 **Received** – the discussion paper at EDCOM 5-04 (18-19) presented by the Director of Access and Admissions.
- 75.2 The Here to Succeed project was aiming to implement a UCL-wide attendance monitoring solution for 2019-20. EdCom was asked to provide feedback on some initial suggestions for associated policy changes, and specifically the possibility of removing the 70% attendance requirement. Students felt that the 70% requirement was somewhat arbitrary, and felt that it was infantilising. They tended to see it as a punitive measure rather than as a mechanism to help with any difficulties that they might be having. Instead it was felt that a much more supportive approach could be taken, whereby absence rather than attendance was monitored, and students having difficulties were directed to support services.

75.3 EdCom discussed the following:

- a) Overall there appeared to be broad support for removing the 70% requirement, as long as robust alternatives were put in place to support students experiencing difficulties, whether that be due to extenuating circumstances or academic insufficiency. While there were variable levels of adoption, the current learning agreement system provided an important tool and helped many students to 'get back on track'. Without such a mechanism, students would receive less support, and faculties would lose an important mechanism to suspend or terminate a student's studies if they were not meeting expectations.
- b) Past investigations had revealed very strongly-held opinions about, for example, the removal of the authorised absence requirement for home students. At that time, the Students' Union had expressed a very different view, so it would be important to consult students before a decision was made.
- c) It was noted that the current Authorised Absence policy weighed more heavily on international students due to Tier 4 requirements, and that SMT had expressed a desire for all students to be treated equally. EdCom broadly agreed with the principle of parity, but expressed concern about the very high caseload that this could create, with students having to submit forms and find evidence, and departments having to process high numbers of absence requests. It was felt that an externally-driven requirement should not lead to all students experiencing greater bureaucracy. It was however felt that the current Authorised Absence policy might be more complex than was perhaps needed under current Tier 4 requirements – if this process could be pared back, there would be more scope for extending it to more students.
- d) The current policy was not implemented consistently, in part because different disciplines had very different contact hours and attendance patterns. As a result, the 70% had to be defined locally, which meant that some students were subject to much higher levels of monitoring than others.
- e) Research indicated a strong link between attendance/ engagement and attainment. Some members felt that the current policy helped to encourage that relationship, but others felt that it was not an effective way of doing so. It would be important for any replacement policy to really emphasise to students that attending classes will help them to get the best degree outcome possible.
- f) Concern was expressed about how a replacement system might work on online programmes where engagement and participation were particularly important.

75.4 EdCom was also asked to consider whether the 70% requirement could be removed for the 2019-20 academic session. Whilst there was a lot of support for this approach, it was felt that it was too late in the year to expect departments to put alternative arrangements in place. While many would welcome the change, many would also worry about students disengaging from their studies. It would also be important to take time to consult with students and staff on an alternative, and some professional bodies might also need to be involved. The attendance requirement also had a direct impact on a number of other policies, such as Authorised Absence, Study Away, Support to Study, Fitness to Study, Learning Agreements, Barring, Suspensions and Terminations of Study. It was noted that these had already been flagged for review during the next year by Academic Services.

75.5 **Agreed** – the regulations would not change for 2019-20. ARQASC would have a more detailed discussion about the proposals and feedback from both committees would be passed onto the project team.

76 STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

76.1 **Received** – the paper at [EDCOM 5-05 \(18-19\)](#) presented by the Assistant Registrar & Senior Policy Adviser (Academic Partnerships).

76.2 The publication of a Student Protection Plan was a condition of registration with the Office for Students. The plan set out UCL's approach to the closure of any aspect of its facilities or academic provision which could have an adverse effect on the interests of current or prospective students. The policy had been updated for 2019-20 to ensure alignment with the new Student Terms and Conditions which were in development.

76.3 **Approved** – the Student Protection Policy 2019-20.

77 DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS PILOT

- 77.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 5-06 (18-19) presented by the Assistant Registrar & Senior Policy Adviser (Academic Partnerships).
- 77.2 UCL had been approved as an apprenticeships provider and a pilot of two Masters programmes in MAPS and Brain Sciences had been initiated. Work was now underway to develop a regulatory framework to underpin the much more intensive requirements for administration, monitoring and data returns involved in delivering apprenticeships which would require the creation of three additional posts in Student and Registry Services. Departments interested in developing any further apprenticeships were being asked to ensure that resource allocation for these central posts was included in their proposals. EdCom members were encouraged to pass expressions of interest were onto OVPESA as this would help to create a critical mass and provide evidence of demand.

Action: Faculty Tutors

78 HARMONISING MODULE EVALUATIONS PROJECT

- 78.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 5-07 (18-19) presented by the Director of Education Planning.
- 78.2 The report outlined the aims of a pilot to test a new harmonised approach to module evaluation. The project team had consulted each faculty on their requirements and had explored the pros and cons of centralised versus local question-setting. The project was proposing five core questions – three on a likert scale and two free-text – which were aligned to the NSS and PTES, and the development of a bank of additional questions for departments to choose from. It was suggested that only the core questions would be analysed centrally, although further discussion was needed on the viability of analysing a high volume of free-text data.
- 78.3 EdCom welcomed the development and noted that it would provide a valuable tool in understanding NSS and PTES outcomes. Faculty representatives emphasised the importance of including free-text questions, and many central departments said that they would find the free-text data very valuable. It was recognised that only broad themes could be covered in the small number of questions, but EdCom suggested that the core questions should include a question directly covering assessment. The committee also discussed whether it would be possible to disaggregate departmental, faculty and UCL responsibilities with regards to organisation and management, and whether the word ‘quality’ might be too nebulous. The pilot would provide an opportunity to test the questions’ validity.
- 78.4 EdCom also discussed concerns about replacing paper forms with electronic systems – anecdotal evidence suggested that this could have a considerable impact on response rates, although the recent introduction of an electronic system at the IOE had yielded response rates of 80-90%. A common solution was to use technology to get students to complete surveys in class. Scanning equipment had been considered but was felt to be disproportionately expensive.
- 78.5 **Approved** – EdCom approved the pilot aims. The core questions were broadly supported, although the majority of EdCom members were in favour of a specific assessment question.

Action: Head of Student Engagement

79 INTERRUPTION OF STUDY PROCEDURE

- 79.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 5-08 (18-19) presented by the Chair of the Interruption of Study Task Group.
- 79.2 EdCom had established a task group to look at a range of issues around interruptions. The consultation process had resulted in almost 200 responses from UCL students and staff, and had led to 22 initial proposals. These had now been worked up into a set of regulations which had been scrutinised by ARQASC. The project outputs would also include a range of further guidance, including help from Student Funding on Student Loans Company Change of Circumstances, and discussions were underway to implement an online workflow. The Task Group’s main proposals included removing the need for a complex approval process for basic interruptions; replacing the practice of backdating with deferrals via the Extenuating Circumstances procedure; allowing interruptions for final year flexible students; establishing standard return dates and improving support for students when they return to study.

- 79.3 The Chair thanked the group for an important piece of work which would help UCL to better support students. EdCom queried the decision to stop backdating interruptions. After detailed discussions the task group had agreed that the fairest approach would be to record the actual date in the student record system and allow students to apply for a deferral, either with or without tuition, for any classes or assessments which might have been affected in the period leading up to the interruption. EdCom expressed some concern about students having to complete more than one form, although the task group was aiming to create an online workflow to make the process easier. It was also important to record the correct interruption date as it could have a substantive impact on student funding – at present some students were being asked to immediately pay back their loans as soon as they interrupted, which could add to an already difficult situation. The new process also encouraged students to seek support from their department, Student Support and Wellbeing or the SU Advice Service if they needed help completing forms and finding evidence.
- 79.4 **Approved** – the Interruption of Study Procedure for 2019-20.

80 STUDENT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT PROCEDURE

- 80.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 5-09 (18-19) presented by the Chair of the Student Academic Misconduct Working Group and the Policy Advisor (Regulations and Quality Assurance).
- 80.2 EdCom established a Student Academic Misconduct Task Group to review and update the Examination Irregularities & Plagiarism Procedures. After a number of task group meetings, a wide consultation with Chairs of Boards of Examiners, Faculty Tutors and other key UCL staff, and the approval of proposals by ARQASC, the task group's proposals were being presented for formal approval. Key changes included a structured table of penalties to promote greater consistency across different departments and faculties and provide a more granular grading scale with six "tiers" of adjudication and penalty. The proposals also adopted the 'balance of probabilities' standard of proof for all academic misconduct, and included a much clearer distinction between misconduct and Poor Academic Practice. The task group was also exploring the viability of an online course on avoiding academic misconduct which had been developed by the IOE.
- 80.3 EdCom thanked the task group for resolving a complex set of issues, and especially commended the table of penalties and the opportunity to viva students, particularly in contract cheating cases. It was noted that there was an additional level of adjudication - some cases which would have previously gone to the Module Leader would now need to be considered by Departmental Tutors. EdCom agreed that the spread of cases should be reviewed after the first year of implementation to assess whether caseloads were manageable, and asked the Task Group to provide a report to the first meeting of 2020-21.

Action: Student Academic Misconduct Task Group

- 80.4 Academic Services had recently received its annual report from the OIA and had been pleased to see that nearly all of the recommendations had been addressed by the task group. The only outstanding issue was the use of Latin phrases, such as *prima facie*, which the OIA felt to be inaccessible. However EdCom felt that, in the case of contract cheating, this was an important concept that should be retained. It was however suggested that the accompanying guidance include an explanation of the term.

Action: Student Academic Misconduct Task Group

81 MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

- 81.1 **Received** – the proposals at EDCOM 5-10 (18-19) presented by the Faculty Tutor, Population Health Sciences.
- 81.2 Population Health Sciences had put forward a proposal for a new MPH qualification. The qualification was very well established with 14 out of 20 Russell Group institutions offering such an award. There was international recognition of the distinct qualities of MPH graduates and the qualification acted as a signal for accreditors and funders that UCL was offering certain competencies. The faculty's own market research had indicated increasing movement towards discrete MPH programmes, and two recent IQR panels had explored the potential for such a qualification.

- 81.3 **Endorsed** – EdCom recommended that Academic Committee approve the creation of the new qualification of Master of Public Health.

PART III: OTHER MATTERS FOR APPROVAL OR INFORMATION

82 CHAPTER 2: QUALIFICATIONS AND CREDIT FRAMEWORK 2019-20

- 82.1 **Approved** – the changes to the Academic Manual 2019-20 detailed at [EDCOM 5-11 \(18-19\)](#).

83 CHAPTER 3: REGISTRATION FRAMEWORK FOR TAUGHT PROGRAMMES 2019-20

83A Withdrawing from a Programme (Student Transfers)

- Approved** – the changes to the Academic Manual 2019-20 detailed at [EDCOM 5-12 \(18-19\)](#).

84 CHAPTER 4: ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR TAUGHT PROGRAMMES 2019-20

- 84.1 **Approved** – the changes to the Academic Manual 2019-20 detailed at [EDCOM 5-13 \(18-19\)](#).

85 CHAPTER 6: STUDENT CASEWORK FRAMEWORK 2019-20 5-14 (18-19)

- 85.1 **Approved** – the changes to the Academic Manual 2019-20 detailed at [EDCOM 5-14 \(18-19\)](#).

86 CHAPTER 7: PROGRAMME AND MODULE APPROVAL AND AMENDMENT FRAMEWORK 2019-20

- 86.1 **Approved** – the changes to the Academic Manual 2019-20 detailed at [EDCOM 5-15 \(18-19\)](#).

87 APPROVAL OF NEW PROGRAMMES OF STUDY 5-16 (18-19)

- 87.1 **Approved** – the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at [EDCOM 5-16 \(18-19\)](#).

88 MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

- 88.1 **Approved** – the minutes of the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub Committee held 28 January 2019 at [EDCOM 5-17 \(18-19\)](#).

- 88.2 **Approved** – the minutes of the Programme and Module Approval Panel held 7 March 2019 and 9 April 2019 at [EDCOM 5-18 \(18-19\)](#) and [EDCOM 5-19 \(18-19\)](#).

89 SUSPENSIONS OF REGULATIONS

- 89.1 **Approved** – the Suspensions of Regulations at [EDCOM 5-20 \(18-19\)](#).

90 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

90A NSS Results and Subject-Level TEF Outcomes

The NSS results would be published on 3 July. In contrast to previous years, the data would be published all at once to both institutions and the public. At approximately the same time, the Subject-Level TEF outcomes would be made available to UCL - these would not be made public. The Guardian league tables had also just been published and work was underway to analyse the changes in UCL's rankings – it was thought that the industrial action had had a significant impact.

90B UCL Module Catalogue

The beta version of the new institutional module catalogue would soon be released, and was warmly welcomed by the Chair as an important step forward. EdCom was encouraged to provide feedback.

90C Mark Entry Deadline

The mark entry deadline had just passed. There were encouraging numbers but some pockets of non-engagement. Faculties were asked to encourage their departments to submit marks.

90D Thank You

The Chair thanked the Director of Education Planning, Dr Clare Goudy, for her contribution to EdCom. Clare would be taking up a new post as Chief of Staff to the Provost. The Chair also thanked Professor Tim McHugh for his work in chairing QRSC – this would now be chaired by the new Pro-Vice Provost (Student Experience).

91 DATES OF MEETINGS FOR 2018-19

91.1 **Noted** – the reserve meeting on Thursday 18 July 2019 was cancelled.

LIZZIE VINTON

Secretary to Education Committee

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18 June 2019