



Education Committee

16 November 2023

Confirmed Minutes

Present:

Professor Kathleen Armour (Chair)

Professor Simon Banks; Dr Nicole Brown; Professor Parama Chaudhury; Mr Shaban Chaudhary; Professor Sally Day; Dr Julie Evans; Mr Daniel Farrell; Mr Matteo Fumagalli; Ms Manya Gupta; Ms June Hedges; Professor Arne Hofmann; Mr Ahmad Ismail; Dr Sandra Leaton-Gray; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Jennifer McGowan; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Mary Richardson; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Bill Sillar; Ms Issy Smith; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Professor Olga Thomas; Dr Nalini Vittal and Dr Kathryn Woods.

In attendance: Mr Ashley Doolan (Secretary) and Mr Rob Traynor (Assistant Secretary).

Apologies: Ms Karen Barnard; Mr Ian Davis; Dr Ann Griffin; Dr Rachel King; Dr Margaret Mayston; Professor Nicola Walshe; Dr Francesca Scott; Dr Hazel Smith; and Professor Stan Zochowski.

Part I: Preliminary Business

26. Welcome, Apologies and Announcements

26.1. The Chair welcomed all colleagues to the meeting and extended a special welcome to Ms Manya Gupta to her first meeting as undergraduate student representative. The Chair confirmed that the next meeting, 6 December 2023, would be held in person.

27. Minutes

27.1. Approved – the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 October 2023 [EdCom Minutes 14-25, 2023-24] at EDCOM 3-01 (23-24).

28. Matters Arising

28.1. Arising from minute 20, it was noted that the IQR Panel had met on 15 November to confirm the departments that would be undergoing review in 2023-24. At the meeting,

an adjustment to the Terms of Reference was approved, to feed progress on IQR action plans through the Quality and Standards Committee.

29. Education Committee Sub-Committees Terms of Reference 2023-24

- 29.1. Received – the Terms of Reference and Membership for the Digital Education and Student Experience Sub-Committee at EDCOM 3-02 (23-24) and noted that this committee had been constituted to oversee lots of good work happening within the Education and Student Experience change portfolios in the Information Services Division, ensuring that this work was led and informed by the needs of the academic and student community – represented through our formal governance structures.
- 29.2. Approved - the Terms of Reference and Membership for the Digital Education and Student Experience Sub-Committee, noting that wider academic membership from all eleven faculties would be sourced.
- 29.3. Received – the Terms and Reference and Membership for the Education Process Improvements Steering Group (EPISG) at EDCOM 3-03 (23-24), a group which had been constituted at the request of the Senior Education Team to coordinate the operational delivery of the various education related systems and process improvement projects currently underway at UCL, for example the Scheduling programme and the procurement of the Curriculum Information Management System. EdCom noted that the EPISG would provide regular updates to the committee on its activities.

30. Report of Chair's Action: BA Education Studies Board of Examiners

- 30.1. Received – a report from the Chair on action that she had taken to confirm the outcomes of the BA Education Studies Board of Examiners that had been impacted by the absence of the external examiners, details of which was provided in paper EDCOM 3-04 (23-24). The Chair commended the Board team for the actions they took to uphold standards and mitigate the impact on students in difficult circumstances.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

31. Student Experience Outcomes: Progress Update

- 31.1. Received – an invitation from the Chair for members to share updates on work being undertaken to improve the student experience within their departments and faculties. During the conversation, the following points were noted:
 - a) That students in some departments were reporting a profound sense of disengagement with their studies, citing difficulty engaging with their peers and

with building friendship groups. They noted that many of their peers were focused on attaining their award and showed no interest in engagement beyond that.

- b) This was a new phenomenon for several departments with successful departmental societies that had historically enjoyed good engagement and involvement from students. It was noted that, this unfortunately mirrored a national picture affecting the cohorts who studied during the pandemic.
- c) There were many opportunities through the work being done within the education strategy, and the student life strategy, to create space for students to engage with activity beyond their study, both by freeing up time within programmes, and through making more opportunities to access sport, cultural and work-based activities.
- d) That cost-of-living pressures were likely also contributing to the drop in engagement, with the Students' Union reporting an increase in enquiries both to their advice services and to access part-time working opportunities. Work was already under way to identify actions the Students' Union could take to help in this area.

31.2. The Chair invited members to continue to reflect on these challenges and confirmed that further discussion of the work being done to address student disengagement at department and faculty level would be tabled for a future Education Committee meeting.

32. Report of the Personal Tutoring Review

- 32.1. Received – the interim report of the Personal Tutoring Review Steering Committee at EDCOM 3-05 (23-24) presented by Dr Kathryn Woods, Pro-Vice Provost Education and Student Experience – Student Academic Support. EdCom was asked to endorse the report, and the proposal to conduct a community consultation on how the report's findings could be turned into implementable recommendations.
- 32.2. The report noted that the Steering Committee has surveyed personal tutoring policies across the sector, and current practices within UCL to identify areas of good practice, and areas where UCL may be misaligned with it. The internal survey found that nearly 50% of staff and students reported that the current personal tutoring provision was not working for them – though both groups also said that they valued personal tutoring in principle.
- 32.3. Students particularly reported that they felt they were missing good academic support, and that some of the anxiety they express and receive mitigation for through

other student support mechanisms could be avoided through better personal tutoring provision.

- 32.4. Through a review of current practice, it was felt that personal tutoring generally worked best when it was delivered one-to-one, was tailored to the local circumstances of the programme, and where the personal tutors themselves had clear and effective support in their roles.
- 32.5. EdCom thanked the Steering Committee for its work, with particular thanks to Dr Kathryn Woods, Dr Peter Fitch and Mrs Sally Mackenzie. In their discussion of the findings, they noted the following key points:
- a) That while variation in local contexts was highlighted as good practice, there also had to be a minimum benchmark, which was appropriately ambitious, to ensure that students were by and large receiving the same quality of support across UCL.
 - b) That any eventual policy on personal tutoring should clearly set out the expectations of the role, with particular focus on the balance between academic and pastoral support, and the need not to place staff in positions for which they are not trained.
 - c) That the information provided to personal tutors to assist them with supporting their tutees would need significant work to enable a more effective system. It was noted that work was underway on developing a student information dashboard for tutors.
 - d) That the current lack of clear and consistent routes to academic support presented clear challenges for students entering UCL from outside of the English education system, or for students who were the first in their family to enter university.
- 32.6. Agreed – to endorse the report, its findings, and the proposal to consult with the community on the steps needed to implement it.

33. Improvements to Staff Student Consultative Committees

- 33.1. Received – a proposal, endorsed by the Student Staff Partnership Committee, at EDCOM 3-06 (23-24) to recommend changes to the Regulations for Management related to the management of Staff Student Consultative Committees within departments and faculties.
- 33.2. Dr Woods, who presented the paper, noted that the following changes were being proposed:

- a) To change the name of the committees to Student Partnership Committees. The reason for this change was to better signal the purpose of these committees, and to reflect the move away from their use as a bureaucratic quality assurance function which was started by the review of the terms of reference.
 - b) To require faculties to have Student Partnership Committees, made up of their Lead Department Representatives, to provide a proper escalation and reporting point for the SPCs in departments. These faculty committees would then in turn report into the Student Staff Partnership Committee.
 - c) To remove the provision for interdisciplinary programmes to run separate SSCCs, instead requiring a home department to consider the needs of students on such a programme through its main SPC, alongside other programmes.
- 33.3. EdCom noted the importance of ensuring that, for the interdisciplinary programmes, it would be important to invite representatives from partner teaching departments to the home department SPC.
- 33.4. Resolved – to endorse the proposed changes to the Regulations for Management and to support their submission to Academic Committee for its consideration and endorsement.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

34. Degree Apprenticeships Strategy

- 34.1. Received – the strategic plan to increase the size of the degree apprenticeship programme portfolio at EDCOM 3-07 (23-24) that was considered and approved by the University Management Committee in October 2023.

35. Russell Group Response to OfS Consultation on Modular Study

- 35.1. Received – the response submitted by the Russell Group at EDCOM 3-08 (23-24) to the Office for Students call for Evidence on positive outcomes for students studying on a modular basis, which was submitted on 24 October 2023.

36. Any other business

- 36.1. The Chair noted that the work of the Research-Intensive Education project had commenced and that a report would be submitted to a future Education Committee meeting in the 2023-24 academic session.

37. Date of the next meeting

- 37.1. EdCom's remaining meetings for the 2023-24 academic year are scheduled for:
- Wednesday, 6 December 2023, 14:00 - 16:30
 - Thursday, 1 February 2024, 14.00 - 16:30

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- Thursday, 25 April 2024, 14:00 - 16:30
- Thursday, 27 June 2024, 14.00 - 16:30
- Thursday 25 July 2024, 14:00 - 16:30

Ashley Doolan
November 2023