Education Committee

18 October 2022

Confirmed Minutes

Present:
Professor Kathy Armour (Chair)
Dr Ali Abolfathi; Mr Hamza Ahmed; Professor Simon Banks; Ms Karen Barnard; Dr Nicole Brown; Ms Sarah Cowls (Deputy Chair for Minutes 20 and 21); Professor Sally Day; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Ms Megan Gerrie; Ms June Hedges; Professor Arne Hofmann; Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho; Mr Zak Liddell; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva; Dr Margaret Mayston; Ms Seyi Osi; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Mary Richardson; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Professor Bill Sillar; Dr Hazel Smith; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Ms Lizzie Vinton; Dr Nalini Vittal; Professor Nicola Walshe and Professor Stan Zochowski.

In attendance: Ms Evi Katsapi (for Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce); Professor Marc Moore (for Professor Olga Thomas); Professor Jill Norman (for Ms Blathnaid Mahony); Ms Hannah Swallow (Minute 22) and Mr Rob Traynor (Interim Secretary).

Apologies: Mr Ian Davis; Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce; Dr Rachel King; Ms Blathnaid Mahony and Professor Olga Thomas.

Part I: Preliminary Business

14.   Welcome and Announcements

14.1.   The Chair welcomed the members and guests to the meeting and made the following announcements:

   i.   Faculty Education Plans – faculties were congratulated on the developing plans which were of a high standard and contained interesting information. It was positive that faculties were also sharing information from the plans.
   ii.   [Continuous Module Dialogue](#) – departments were encouraged to participate in the new process which replaced Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQ). The process allowed departments some flexibility in adapting the policy for their own needs and there were no central reporting requirements in terms of outcomes. Departments were encouraged to engage with students in dialogue about their feedback and ways to address concerns and issues raised.
   iii.   Project 1 of the UCL Education Strategy – Phase 1 was underway to scope the project with EdCom participation key for the goal to create a UCL Education Framework encompassing teaching, learning and assessment. Nous, an external education consulting service, was engaged to help with this work to determine the scale of UCL

ambition. A Peer Change Group was being set up to support the work and provide an opportunity for UCL's up-and-coming education talent to contribute. Staff from education teams or people leading education in other ways were encouraged to join. **Agreed:** that faculties nominate a member of staff to join the Peer Change Group if they have not yet done so (contact sally.mackenzie@ucl.ac.uk)**.**
Action: Faculty tutors and other faculty representatives to note

15.   Minutes of the Previous Meeting

15.1.   Approved – the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 September 2022 [EdCom Minutes 1-13, 2022-23] at EDCOM 2-01 (22-23). Minor errors were amended in the minutes following the meeting.

16.   Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

16A   Timetabling and Scheduling
[Minute 5, EdCom 20.09.2022]

16A.1 EdCom had discussed timetabling at the previous meeting and agreed to support UCL Estates' proposals to change UCL's approach and implement scheduling from 2023-24.

16A.2 The Chair provided a further update and noted the implications arising from the forthcoming Office for Students (OfS) report on a review of blended learning. The outcomes of the review were under embargo by the OfS and would be reported to the next meeting. However, some caution was urged in ensuring student access to physical space and face to face learning, as not doing so risked breaching the OfS B condition regulations.

17.   Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership of Education Committee Sub-Committees and Groups 2022-23

17.1.   **Approved** – the Terms of Reference (ToR), Constitution and Membership for the Academic Partnerships Review Group (APRG) 2022-23 at EDCOM 2-02 (22-23), subject to the following:

   i.   ToR iv - APRG should be mindful of changes to the Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) and Internal Quality Review (IQR) - i.e. that it should consider reports arising from the two processes as appropriate. This ToR may need to be updated in future as the policies are reviewed and refined.
   ii.   ToR v – the OfS no longer requires institutions to report new academic partnerships to it (Condition 3F of the OfS Regulatory Framework). This ToR should be removed.

17.2.   **Approved** – the Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (ARQASC) 2022-23 at EDCOM 2-03 (22-23), subject to updating changes in its membership.

17.3. **Approved** – the Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for the Programme and Module Approval Panels (PMAP) 2022-23 at EDCOM 2-04 (22-23).

17.4. **Approved** – the Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for the Quality Review Sub-Committee (QRSC) 2022-23 at EDCOM 2-05 (22-23).

17.5. **Approved** – the Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for the Degree Apprenticeships Steering Group (DASG) 2022-23 at EDCOM 2-06 (22-23).

18. Deadlines for Changes to the Academic Manual 2022-23

18.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 2-07 (22-23) which outlined the key deadlines for EdCom approval of any proposed changes to the regulations and the Academic Manual for 2023-24.

18.2. EdCom noted the deadlines and timelines, to be considered when developing policy. The June 2023 meeting date should be considered the final deadline for approval of any changes, with regulations only submitted to this meeting once in their final form. A staff guide to developing academic regulations and policy development was available in the Academic Manual.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

19. UCL's Teaching Excellence Framework Dashboard Data

19.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 2-08 (22-23), introduced by the Chair and Ms Lizzie Vinton, Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Lead. The paper considered UCL's TEF data provided by the OfS for the 2023 submission and compares this data with the estimates noted at EdCom's previous meeting. It also noted other key metrics (referred to as "indicators" by the OfS) and the subject-level and demographic split metrics.

19.2. EdCom noted that the UCL TEF data would not be compared against benchmarks of the sector as a whole, but rather those institutions with a similar profile in terms of subject range and student demographics. The benchmarks were tougher than anticipated with the nett effect of producing fewer Gold and more Bronze indicators. It would be more challenging to achieve Silver overall than previously thought. Analysis would be conducted of other universities' data to understand how UCL compared to the sector and peer institutions.

19.3. The TEF Panels would also look closely at individual subjects, with detailed subject-level metrics ('split indicators') being publicly available. Close scrutiny was likely for any significantly low scores against the subject benchmarks and there were concerns for some UCL subjects, with one being -14% below an indicator benchmark. More positively, UCL's indicators and subjects scores had improved over the four years and it would be possible to present a narrative of continuing improvement.

19.4. It was queried whether UCL would be able to reference its experiences during the COVID 19 pandemic in the submission and highlight how the most recent cohort was disappointed not to be given the same "no detriment" mitigation as those during the original lock-downs. It was

noted that the pandemic had affected all institutions and that UCL's student satisfaction had improved in terms of its closeness to the benchmarks. It had not experienced a collapse in student satisfaction which affected some other institutions.

19.5. Some concerns were expressed regarding the Student Voice indicator which although Silver, was lower against the benchmark than anticipated. TEF Panels tended to view it as a signifier, considering it emblematic of the wider student experience. It was suggested that the Students' Union (SU) positive views on its experiences during the pandemic and involvement in emergency planning should help UCL's overall narrative. This was likely to feature in the SU's TEF submission.

19.6. EdCom noted that the TEF Steering Group was examining UCL's previous TEF submissions to ensure continuity and was now focussing on the different indicators, including Academic Support. The Registrar was leading the academic support stream of the TEF submission and invited faculties to suggest people who might be interested in contributing to the work stream (contact sarah.cowls@ucl.ac.uk).
Action: EdCom members and Sarah Cowls to note.

20. Graduate Outcomes 2019-20 Comparison Data

20.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 2-09 (22-23) introduced by Ms Karen Barnard, Director of UCL Careers which presented the key figures from the Graduate Outcomes Survey with data collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

20.2. The survey results were from the 2019-20 cohort, of all levels of study, surveyed fifteen months after completing their programmes. 49.8% of graduates responded to the survey and the report provided headline figures and an institutional comparison with the Russell Group. The data would also contribute to the TEF 'Progression' metrics, used to measure how well institutions met Condition B3 in the OfS Regulatory Framework. Faculties and departments would be provided with more detailed data, including demographic splits.

20.3. Unemployment had risen to 4.2% (+ 0.9% on 2018-19) which placed UCL in fourteenth position in the Russell Group. This was anomalous as a sizeable minority of students who stated that they were unemployed either also gave the name of an employer or said they were studying but not working. This appeared to result from the wording of the question and factoring in these response would reduce the unemployment rate to 3.5%.

20.4. More positively, the proportion of graduates in highly-skilled work had improved to 93.2% (+6% on 2018-19), with UCL ranked fifth in the Russell Group. The educational gains measure was also used in the TEF and showed a good progression as most undergraduate (UG) students stated that they had a careers plan following graduation. Many students also chose to stay at UCL for further study. There was also better news on the graduate voice questions with UCL ranked equal fourth in the Russell Group for two of the questions and joint first for the question on whether graduates found their current activity meaningful.

21.   Essay Mills: Government Advice

21.1.   Received - the paper at EDCOM 2-10 (22-23) presented by the Chair. This presented a letter from Alex Burghart, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills on the recent criminalisation of essay mills. It was noted that EdCom will also receive the annual report on student academic misconduct at the next meeting,

21.2.   EdCom noted that UCL had expelled 31 students for contract cheating in the previous session. The following points were noted:

   i.   Contract cheating - it was very difficult to identify in practice and it was suggested that staff required more support and advice in managing cases. The US company involved in many cases not only enabled misconduct on essays, but also on short answers for quantitative subjects. Advice was also required should staff or students see people advertising for contract cheating and where to report this, the university or the police.
   ii.   Penalties - concern was raised regarding a misconduct panel which found a student guilty of contract cheating but chose to suspend rather than expel the student. It was noted that this was a complex and difficult case with good reasons for the decision. Suspension was also now allowed in the Academic Manual (Chapter 6 Student Academic Misconduct), though as a deterrent, expulsion would continue to be the main penalty in the majority of contract cheating cases.
   iii. Support for excluded students – it was suggested that a UCL-wide scheme be introduced to help these students. Whilst it was appropriate that they received punishment for the misconduct, exclusion was traumatic for them and UCL had a responsibility to support them with their transition to leaving the institution.
         Agreed: that the Engineering faculty share details of its scheme developed to deal with early leavers, in order to encourage discussion on wider practice in UCL.
         Action: Professor Simon Banks
   iv.   Communications on academic misconduct to students and staff - recent research revealed a wide perception amongst students and some staff, that academic misconduct was not a serious matter. It was suggested that the criminalisation of essay mills might be used in a communications campaign to ensure greater understanding of academic misconduct. The campaign should also provide clear information to students and staff and also emphasize good practice and conduct.

21.3.   **Agreed:** that the Registrar discuss the suggestions from the EdCom discussion with the Casework team and the Working Group on Academic Misconduct. This would include a communications campaign, clarity on the definitions of different types of misconduct, ways to improve resource and information sharing and the support provided to excluded students.
         Action: Sarah Cowls

22. Office for Students Consultation On A New Approach To Regulating Equality Of Opportunity

22.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 2-11 (22-23) introduced by Ms Hannah Swallow, Compliance Manager, SRS. The OfS are consulting with universities on proposals for regulating equality of opportunity in higher education. The consultation focussed on proposed reforms of Access and Participation Plans (APP) and EdCom's views were sought on the draft UCL response outlined in the additional annex to the paper.

22.2. There was general agreement with the view that it was neither the higher education sector's responsibility nor within its power, to raise attainment in schools. Concerns were also expressed on how the OfS intended to assess APPs, the proposed mandatory targets and the regulatory burden that might be placed on universities. It was unclear how the proposals would raise school pupil attainment as there was a lack of evidence of successful interventions to raise attainment outside of the schools themselves. However, EdCom noted a number of UCL examples of successful engagement with schools to encourage greater applications from under-represented groups, such as the Into Science initiative, focussing on applications to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (StEM) subjects.

22.3. Agreed: that EdCom members contact the Compliance Team with any further comments and suggestions for the draft response to the OfS consultation (srs-compliance@ucl.ac.uk).
Action – EdCom members to note.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

23. EdCom Annual Report To Academic Committee 2021-22

23.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 2-12 (22-23). This summarised EdCom's main activities in the previous session, separated thematically into sections outlining key areas such as learning, teaching and assessment, the student experience, changes to academic regulations and the work of EdCom's sub-committees. Requests for minor changes to the draft report were received, including one relating to the education strategic plan discussions and its reporting to Academic Board.

23.2. **Agreed:** Members were requested to send any suggestions for further amendments to the report to the Secretary and a final draft would then be approved by Chair's action.
Action: EdCom members to note.

24. Approval of New Programmes of Study

24.1. Approved - the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 2-13 (22-23).

25. Approval of Academic Partnerships

25.1. Approved - the academic partnership recommended by APRG at EDCOM 2-14 (22-23).

26.   Suspensions of Regulations Report

26.1. Approved - the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 2-15 (21-22)

27.   Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

27.1. Approved the minutes of ARQASC held on 27 April 2022 and 19 May 2022 at EDCOM 2-16 (22-23) and EDCOM 2-17 (22-23).

27.2. Approved the minutes of PMAP held on 5 May 2022 and 7 July 2022 at EDCOM 2-18 (22-23) and EDCOM 2-19 (22-23).

27.3. Approved the minutes of DASG held on 22 August 2022 at EDCOM 2-20 (22-23).

28.   Any Other Business

28.1. None received.

29.   Dates of Next Meeting

29.1. The dates of the EdCom meetings for the rest of the 2022-23 session are:

- Tuesday 15 November 2022, 14.00 - 16:30
- Tuesday, 6 December 2022, 14:00 - 16:30
- Tuesday, 7 February 2023, 14.00 - 16:30
- Tuesday, 25 April 2023, 14:00 - 16:30
- Tuesday, 27 June 2023, 14.00 - 16:30
- Tuesday 25 July 2023, 14:00 - 16:30

Note: an additional meeting may be called during December to consider the TEF submission.

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October 2022