Education Committee

19 July 2022

Confirmed Minutes

Present:
Professor Kathy Armour (Chair)

Dr Ali Abolfathi; Mr Hamza Ahmed; Professor Simon Banks; Professor Parama Chaudhary; Ms Sarah Cowls; Mr Ian Davis; Professor Sally Day; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Professor Alistair Greig; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Jane Holder; Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho; Mr Zak Liddell; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva, Professor Chloe Marshall; Ms Seyi Osi; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson, Professor Sam Smidt; Dr Hazel Smith; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Professor Olga Thomas; Ms Lizzie Vinton and Professor Stan Zochowski.

In attendance: Ms Evi Katsapi (for Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce); Ms Sally Mackenzie (Minute 102 and 106); Ms Hannah Swallow (Minute 107); Mr Simon To (Minute 104); Mr Ash Talwar (Minute 112); Ms Sonia Virdee (Minute 110); Mr Ben Watson (Minute 111); Ms Alison Edridge (Secretary) and Mr Rob Traynor (Assistant Secretary).

Apologies: Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce; Ms June Hedges; Professor Chloe Marshall and Dr Bill Sillar.

Part I: Preliminary Business

97. Minutes of the Last Meeting

97.1. Approved – the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2022 [EdCom Minutes 75-96, 2021-22] at EDCOM 6-01 (21-22).

98. Matters Arising from the Minutes

98.1. Minutes 75.1 (Announcements) – candidates had been short listed for interview for the Pro Vice-Provost (Student Engagement) role.

98.2. Minutes 75.1 (Announcements) – UCL did not meet the criteria for the OfS funding call for capital projects so the proposed bid for a project on learning analytics had been withdrawn.

98.3. Minute 79.5 (Report from the Degree Outcomes Steering Group) – the provision of comparator benchmarks at subject level was in the process of being explored.

99.   Chair's Action Taken Since the Last Meeting

99.1.   Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-02 (21-22) which outlined Chair's action taken to approve mitigation by four Boards of Examiners for non-attendance of external examiners in accordance with UCL's regulations. The Chair commended the approach taken by the Boards of Examiners in these cases.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

100.   Introduction to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2022-23

100.1.   Received – a presentation from the TEF Lead providing a summary of how the next TEF exercise would operate in 2022-23. The TEF was part of the Office for Students' (OfS) approach to regulation and rated providers for excellence above the baseline for quality. It was noted that the presentation (circulated to EdCom after the meeting) contained confidential data so should not be circulated without the TEF Lead's permission. The presentation outlined the timeframe for the TEF, the scope of provision included, how data dashboards, provider and student submissions would be used in TEF assessments, how providers would be rated and the use of institutional benchmarks in the rating process. OfS had responded to feedback from the sector with regards to the proposed timing of the next exercise and the submission window would now close in early 2023.

100.2.   The TEF Lead had been analysing the TEF data dashboard for UCL's full-time undergraduate students and the impact that the NSS results 2022 were likely to have on this. Whilst the analysis was an approximation, it indicated that UCL had improved its performance in every metric but would continue to be rated bronze in Assessment and Feedback and Academic Support. This suggested that interventions that UCL had made were having an impact. It was noted, however, that TEF assessors would be looking at consistency across the institution so UCL's provider submission would need to acknowledge challenges in weaker areas and set out how these were being addressed.

100.3.   The final methodology that would be used in the TEF was expected to be published in the next few weeks and data dashboards were expected to be made available in September 2022. Data would be publicly available and whilst subjects would not be rated individually in the TEF, subject data would be published and considered in the assessment process. There remains a possibility the subject level teaching quality data could be used by league table compilers to develop additional rankings.

100.4.   A member queried to what extent the OfS would consider the impact of Covid and the decisions that providers would have made during this period, which had affected the metrics that they would be assessed on. It was noted that all institutions had been affected by Covid. UCL would need to explain areas in which it was consistently below other providers or where it was apparent that issues that existed prior to the pandemic

were still present. Assessment and feedback would therefore need to be a particular focus.

100.5. It was noted that information included in the provider submission would need to be consistent with the narrative submitted in the last TEF and any references to the previous Education Strategy. Progress with the plans mentioned in the last submission would also need to be set out. The TEF Lead confirmed that she was in the process of cataloguing themes, changes and improvements since the last submission. Work to compare the OfS statements of findings from the last TEF for Russell Group institutions who had achieved gold and bronze was also underway.

101. Teaching Excellence Framework Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference

101.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-02 (21-22) containing proposed terms of reference and composition of a TEF Task and Finish group to steer the development of UCL's provider submission, and to support students with developing the independent student submission.

101.2. It was suggested that the Task and Finish Group would benefit from greater representation from staff engaged with teaching in departments. It was agreed that this would be considered at the first meeting of the Group.

101.3. Approved – the paper at EDCOM 6-02 (21-22) subject to discussion by the Group at its first meeting regarding representation of teaching staff.
Action: Lizzie Vinton (TEF Lead)

102. National Student Survey (NSS) 2022 Results

102.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-04 (21-22) introduced by the Associate Director (Student Engagement and Experience), which summarised the institutional level NSS 2022 and included comparisons against the sector and the Russell Group. Headlines included:
- There had been a response rate of 71% and the results were encouraging.
- UCL had moved into the top quartile for Learning Resources, Learning Opportunities and Student Voice.
- Overall satisfaction had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels but was recovering more quickly in comparison with the sector.
- UCL had performed relatively well within the Russell Group although there was variability at individual question level and between departments. Efforts needed to be targeted in areas where there was high variability in scores.
- There had been some improvement for Assessment and Feedback but not as much as in other areas.
- UCL had improved its position within the sector in Learning Community (up from 141st to 82nd), Teaching (up from 139th to 55th) and Organisation and Management (120th to 41st).
- Overall, there were more areas rated silver for TEF purposes, than bronze.

102.2. EdCom discussed the next steps set out in the paper which had been agreed by UMC. The following comments were made:

- Students were provided with opportunities to provide feedback on their experience but further work was required to make this more of a two-way dialogue so that students were clear on how their feedback had been responded to. For example, actions taken in response to feedback provided at Student Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs) were sometimes reported to the next SSCC meeting but it was not clear if or how student representatives cascaded this to other students. The Chair noted the importance of good engagement between programme teams and students. The new module dialogue process would enable swift action to be taken in response to feedback that would be more evident to students.
- Students would benefit from greater clarity about who they could escalate an issue to if it had not been addressed satisfactorily without needing to pursue a formal complaint. As Faculties had different organisational structures, it was agreed that each Faculty should identify the appropriate individual to whom issues could be escalated.
  Action: Faculty Tutors to identify, for inclusion in programme handbooks, an individual to whom students could escalate issues within their faculties.
- Work was taking place to review the usefulness of Unitu, UCL's online student voice platform, and whether there was evidence to support its continued use.
- Students generally wanted to know why they had received a particular mark in an assessment but it was difficult to mark with such precision. Consideration could be given to step-marking (i.e. in narrative-type assessments) which would address the issue of precision in marking. However, whichever marking system was used, students would still require clarity about marking criteria and how feedback on assessment linked the criteria. Practice in this area was currently variable across UCL and this would need to be addressed.
- A student representative noted that support from UCL was required to ensure that academic representatives, of which there were approximately 2000, received sufficient training. The Chair noted that work was in progress with the Students' Union (SU) regarding this.

102.3. The Chair asked members to send any further comments and suggestions regarding the next steps in the paper by email.

103. Faculty Education Plans: A Pilot for 2022-23

103.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-05 (21-22) setting out a pilot process for Faculty Education Plans to address problematic NSS scores in the largest/lowest performing subjects/areas in each Faculty. EdCom was informed that Deans were supportive of the process, which been approved by UMC.

103.2. The Pro-Vice-Provost (Student Academic Experience) would be meeting individually with Deans shortly to identify the programmes, initial steps planned and any support required. The intention was for returning undergraduate finalists to be assured that

action had been taken in response to student feedback and, as a measure of success, we can track any improvements in responses in NSS 2023.

103.3. Support was expressed for the risk-based and timely approach to responding to the NSS. However, reservations were noted about the ability for work to be progressed over the summer when many staff would be on leave. In addition, some issues were of a structural nature and required longer term change initiatives to address them. The Chair noted that it was important to be clear with students about what would and would not be done for the next academic session in a timely manner and that their feedback was being listened to. Longer term projects should be conducted in partnership with students.

103.4. The relationship with the Faculty Education Plans and Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) was queried. The Chair confirmed that the ASER process would be reviewed with the intention of a revised and streamlined process operating in 2022-23 that would be timed to coincide with the release of major student experience datasets.

104.   Review of Education Committee and Sub-Committees

104.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 6-06 (21-22) providing an overview of work to review the number and purpose of Education-related committees and sub-committees. The review would consider the flow of information to EdCom to ensure it receives the information it requires in a timely manner to enable it to discharge its responsibilities effectively (based on its terms of reference).

104.2. The following points were discussed:
- The flow of information from EdCom to faculties, departments and other committees was as important as the information flow up to EdCom.
- The review of the Student Experience Committee (StEC) was welcomed as its function may have drifted from that originally intended, and this may not have been helpful for promoting the student voice. A Student Life Committee would be useful in picking up issues relating to the broader student experience.
- The paper stated that there were no Vice-Deans (Education) on EdCom which was incorrect. The Chair clarified the role was not referred to explicitly in EdCom's composition, which meant that any Vice-Deans (Education) on EdCom were members because they were either an Academic Board member or had a combined role.
- There had been an extensive review of EdCom in 2020-21, the outcomes of which had been largely supported. It was suggested that it would be useful to revisit this rather than undertaking another review. It was noted, however, that this is not a review of EdCom or its ToRs, instead it is a review of the information EdCom receives to ensure it can deliver on its ToRs.
- There should be consistent lines of reporting and communication and it was suggested that the Chairs of Faculty Teaching Committees (that should probably be termed Faculty Education Committees) should be the faculty representatives on EdCom. It was noted that the Faculty Tutor's role was full-

time and defined in the Academic Manual whereas the Vice-Dean (Education) role was part-time. The Chair noted that roles operated differently between faculties and it would be useful if they could be clarified.

104.3. More detailed proposals on the adjustment to the committee reporting lines to Edcom would be received at EdCom's next meeting.

105.   Students' Union Student Priorities Report

105.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-07 (21-22) presented by Simon To, the Director of Policy, Governance and Advocacy of the SU.

105.2. The report outlined those areas that students found most positive at UCL, their priorities for areas of improvement and recommendations for action. The most positive areas included teaching delivery, careers, induction and the most negative included timings of assessments, assessment criteria, lecture materials and recordings, and communications. Two sets of recommendations were made relating to assessment, which was a recurring theme in previous reports, and communications particularly in larger departments.

105.3. EdCom welcomed the report. It was agreed that the recommendations should be presented in grid format and include responsibilities, timescales and progress updates. It was further agreed that it would be useful for EdCom members to read the SU's Student Wellbeing report and to receive the recommendations grid from this report. **Action: Simon To to submit the recommendations in grid format from the Student Priorities report and Student Wellbeing report to a future meeting.**

106.   Student Evaluations Policy

106.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 6-08 (21-22) setting out a proposed policy for Student Evaluations comprising Continuous Module Dialogue and Annual Programme Evaluation (APE). This reflected approval of a revised approach to module and programme evaluation by Education Committee at its last meeting.

106.2. The policy was intended to be light touch to enable flexibility to reflect the local context within departments and there would be no requirement to report module dialogue results beyond the module. A suggested summary form for module leads to complete at the end of the term would be provided. This would enable a check to be made that the process was taking place and identification of what was working well, as well as enable the sharing of best practice and monitoring of trends. The APE process would be based on and replace the annual Student Experience Survey process. However, it would include all continuing students and postgraduate students and include a free text question. The revised evaluation processes would be reviewed at the end of 2022-23.

106.3. Approved – the paper at EDCOM 6-08 (21-22).

107. Updated Paper on OfS Conditions and Reportable Events

107.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-09 (21-22) which was an updated version of a paper received at EdCom's meeting on 26 April 2022 containing a change to the mapping of condition B4, for which EdCom would now be the responsible committee.

107.2. It was noted that a reportable event relating to student and consumer protection had been omitted from the paper. An updated version of the paper including this reportable event would be circulated to EdCom following the meeting.

107.3. It was agreed that future EdCom papers should reference the relevant parts of the regulatory framework that they related to in order to frame EdCom's discussions in the context of the regulatory environment.
Action: Secretary to update EdCom paper template

107.4. Approved – the paper at EDCOM 6-09 (21-22).

108. Changes to the Attendance Policy (Academic Manual Chapter 3)

108.1. The Executive Director of Student Services and Registrar reported that a draft revised Attendance Policy was due to be submitted to the previous meeting of EdCom. However, this had not come forward as it was not possible to implement the requirement in the draft policy for students to touch in on card readers at teaching events. A revised and abbreviated policy was now planned but this was dependent on UKVI's requirements for 2022-23, which had not yet been published. Chair's action would be required to approve the policy for 2022-23 following circulation to EdCom for comments.

108.2. A broader review of attendance monitoring would take place during 2022-23. It was noted that there were lessons to be learned from the card readers project regarding costs and currency of technology.

109. Minor Amendments to Student Casework Framework 2022-23 (Academic Manual Chapter 6)

109.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-10 (21-22) proposing minor amendments to the Student Casework Framework. These amendments reflected revisions to handling cases under UCL's Research Misconduct Procedure that had previously been agreed at EdCom and Research Degrees Committee.

109.2. A member queried whether there would be different penalties for postgraduate research (PGR) students for contract cheating as it appeared from the paper that PGR students could be permitted to resubmit and not be excluded, whereas students on taught programmes would be excluded. The Executive Director of Student

Services and Registrar clarified that this was not the intention so the wording would be reviewed.

109.3. A member noted that they were aware of a recent case where a taught student who was found guilty of contract cheating received a lower penalty than exclusion and it was unclear why this was the case. It would be useful to review recent cases to determine whether the regulations were being applied fairly and consistently by panels and whether any further review of the regulations was required.

109.4. Approved – the paper at EDCOM 6-10 (21-22) subject to the wording being reviewed to ensure that the penalties for contract cheating were consistent for PGR and taught students.

110. Changes to Programme and Module Approval Process and Student Numbers Planning (Academic Manual Chapter 7)

110.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-11 (21-22) proposing changes to the Academic Manual to separate the resource and business plan approval from the academic and quality assurance aspects of the new programme approval process. A 'stage 0' approval for new programmes covering the resource and business planning aspects of new programmes would take place through the Financial Performance Committee (FPC). The changes reflected feedback from academic staff and members of PMAP and had been subject to extensive discussion at relevant committees and groups. The Planning Team would be working with Faculty Tutors and Vice-Deans (Education) to trial the process and ensure the supporting templates were appropriate.

110.2. A member queried whether FPC would be considering the content of new programmes to assess whether there was duplication or overlap with existing programmes, and whether FPC had the expertise to do this. It was confirmed that FPC would not be making decisions on this as it would be for the relevant Faculties to reach agreement. FPC would be seeking assurance that discussion and agreement between the relevant Faculties had taken place.

110.3. Approved - the paper at EDCOM 6-11 (21-22).

111. Digital Accessibility Policy

111.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-12 (21-22) outlining an update to the draft Digital Accessibility Policy, which was previously approved by Education Committee on 7 December 2021. The proposed update added a requirement for module organisers to review Moodle Accessibility reports and take action to address inaccessibility issues. Annual reports would be provided for Departmental Teaching Committees to review, and actions taken should be reported to Faculty Teaching Committees. EdCom would

receive an annual report by Faculty in order to be able to follow up on areas of concern.

111.2. Endorsed – the paper at EDCOM 6-12 (21-22), which would be submitted to University Management Committee (UMC) for final approval.

112. Student Religion and Belief Guidance

112.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-13 (21-22) which set out proposed guidance for inclusion in the Academic Manual on how students' needs with respect to religion and belief would be met by UCL. The guidance had been approved by UMC and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee earlier in the year. It had subsequently been amended to ensure consistency with the regulations in the Academic Manual for 2022-23.

112.2. It was suggested that the reference to 'bottled water' in the Food and Drink section be amended to 'water' to reflect a sustainable approach. It was noted that the Teaching, Learning and Assessment section covered absence relating to religious observance for students but not for staff members. It was confirmed that the guidance was focused on students and a separate document for staff would be developed.

112.3. Approved – the paper at EDCOM 6-13 (21-22). The Executive Director of Student Services and Registrar requested that the document be published as UCL guidance separately rather than as an entry in the Academic Manual. There was a plan to review the Academic Manual in the coming months with the aim of reducing its size and separating regulation, policy and guidance.

113. Timetabling Policy 2022-23

113.1. This item was withdrawn.

Part III: Other Matters for Approval or Information

114. Changes to Student Recruitment and Admissions (Academic Manual Chapter 1)

114.1. Approved – the paper at EDCOM 6-15 (21-22). A member queried whether the minimum English Language requirements were sufficient for studying at university level. It was reported that the Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee (StRAFC) had recently agreed to standardise the use of English language tests.

115. Minor Amendments to Module Registration (Academic Manual Chapter 3)

115.1. Approved – the paper at EDCOM 6-16 (21-22)

116. Changes to Academic Manual Chapter 9: Section 4: External Examiners

116.1. Approved – the paper at EDCOM 6-17 (21-22)

117. Approval of Academic Partnerships

117.1. Approved – the academic partnerships recommended by APRG at EDCOM 6-18 (21-22)

118. Approval of New Programmes of Study

118.1. Approved – the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 6-19 (21-22).

119. Suspensions of Regulations Report

119.1. Approved - the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 6-20 (21-22)

120. Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

120.1. Approved – the minutes of APRG held on 17 May 2021 at EDCOM 6-21 (21-22) and EDCOM 5-19 (21-22).

121. Any other business

121.1. The withdrawal of the item on the Timetabling Policy from the agenda was queried. Members expressed concerns about the limited availability of rooms for teaching large groups in person. The Chair acknowledged EdCom's concerns and noted that work was in progress in Estates to address the issues caused by over-recruitment. An item on scheduling was planned for EdCom's next meeting and the Chair would inform EdCom of any updates on the situation in the meantime.

122. Dates of Future Meetings

122.1. To be confirmed.

Alison Edridge (Secretary) and Rob Traynor (Assistant Secretary)
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16 August 2022