



Education Committee

Extraordinary Meeting

20 September 2022

Confirmed Minutes

Present:

Professor Kathy Armour (Chair)

Mr Hamza Ahmed; Ms Karen Barnard; Dr Nicole Brown; Professor Parama Chaudhary; Ms Sarah Cows; Mr Ian Davis; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce; Professor Arne Hofmann; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva; Dr Margaret Mayston; Ms Seyi Osi; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Aeli Roberts; Professor Bill Sillar; Dr Hazel Smith; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Ms Lizzie Vinton; Professor Nicola Walshe and Professor Stan Zochowski.

In attendance: Ms Leigh Kilpert (for Mr Mike Rowson); Ms Sian Minett (Minute 5); Ms Joanne Moles, Professor Simon Walker and Ms Claire Hartill (Minute 6); Ms Bella Malins (Minute 7); and Mr Rob Traynor (Interim Secretary).

Apologies: Dr Ali Abolfathi; Professor Simon Banks; Professor Sally Day; Ms June Hedges; Dr Rachel King; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho; Professor Mary Richardson; Mr Mike Rowson; Professor Olga Thomas and Dr Nalini Vittal.

Part I: Preliminary Business

1. Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2022-23

1.1. Approved – the terms of reference, constitution and membership for Education Committee (EdCom) 2022-23 at EdCom 1-01 (21-22).

1.2. EdCom welcomed the following new members:

- Mr Hamza Ahmed – ex-officio as the Students' Union (SU) Education Officer
- Ms Seyi Osi – ex officio as the SU Equity and Inclusion Officer;
- Professor Parama Chaudhury, Pro-Vice-Provost (Student Academic Experience)
- Ms Karen Barnard, Acting Director, UCL Arena (also Director of UCL Careers)
- Professor Nicola Walshe, Pro-Director (Education), Institute of Education (IOE)
- Dr Margaret Mayston (Division of Biosciences), elected by Academic Board
- Professor Mary Richardson (IOE), elected by Academic Board
- Dr Nalini Vittal (Centre for Languages and International Education - CLIE), elected by Academic Board

Professor Bill Sillar (Institute of Archaeology) was also elected as a professorial member by Academic Board, having already served on EdCom as a non-professorial elected member.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 2.1. Approved – the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 July 2022 [EdCom Minutes 97-122, 2021-22] at EDCOM 1-02 (22-23). The minutes were amended following the meeting to correct minor errors in members' titles.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

- 3.1. Noted - all matters arising were either raised in the agenda or being dealt with for future reporting to the Committee.

4. Chair's Action taken since the Last Meeting

4A Exam Board Mitigation for External Examiners' Non-Attendance (CLIE)

- 4A.1 Received – the paper at EDCOM 1-03 (22-23) which outlined Chair's Action taken to approve the mitigation taken by the CLIE Board of Examiners for non-attendance by two external examiners, following the [Board of Examiners Emergency Procedures](#) (Academic Manual Chapter 4). The Chair was satisfied that the mitigating action was appropriate and in line with the UCL procedures.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

5. Timetabling and Scheduling

- 5.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 1-04 (22-23), introduced by Ms Sian Minett, Director of Timetabling (Service Delivery & Improvement, UCL Estates).
- 5.2. Timetabling was a major cause of concern at UCL, becoming increasingly acute as student numbers grew. The current process was inefficient, often delivering late timetabling that led to staff frustration and student dissatisfaction. University Management Committee (UMC) approved the implementation of an improved scheduling system for the 2023-24 academic year. This aimed to provide a coordinated, centralised timetabling process which promoted ownership of timetabling within faculties, using existing CMIS functionality to better schedule teaching. An academic-led group was proposed to lead a consultation process with representation from departments, Human Resources and staff unions.
- 5.3. Programme diets were critical to the system's effectiveness and it would be necessary to ensure they offered realistic and manageable options, rather than too wide choice. This was a key factor in timetabling complexity at UCL and feedback suggested that many students found the scale of possible options over-whelming. Departments would be invited to review programme diets, using past student choice data to help them arrive at a more realistic

offering. It was suggested that six-eight options were optimal. This would also involve agreeing criteria for staff availability to help improve fairness and efficiency.

- 5.4. EdCom agreed with the necessity to improve timetabling processes, though there were challenges in improving programme diets and helping staff adapt. This would move UCL more in line with sector practice, though it was important to set student expectations over module choice. Departments would be provided with mathematical algorithms to enable modelling of diet complexity based on the number of options selected. It was asked whether more online provision could lessen space demands, but noted that it would have limited effect while degrees were set up for in-person learning, though this might change in future.
- 5.5. The discussion also raised concerns with reviewing staffing arrangements for timetabling. Many individual teaching arrangements had been in place for some time and changes in cultural practice may be needed. Some staff were also not employed by UCL in a number of faculties, such as NHS staff delivering clinical teaching. This would require sensitive discussion with departments and recognition of programme requirements and constraints. Teaching provided outside of UCL accommodation would also need to be included in the integrated timetable to be visible to students.
- 5.6. **Agreed:** that EdCom support the proposals outlined in Paper 1-04 (22-23) to change UCL's approach to timetabling and implement scheduling from 2023-24.
Action: Sian Minett to note

6. Student Regulations for Exams and Assessments 2022-23

- 6.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 1-05 (22-23) introduced by Ms Joanne Moles, Head of Assessment Delivery and Platforms (Academic Services, Student and Registry Services - SRS) and Professor Simon Walker, Director of Programme Development (UCL Arena).
- 6.2. EdCom had approved the Teaching and Assessment Operating Model last session (EdCom Minute 9, 14.10.2021). Following this the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (ARQASC) recommended proposals to update the Academic Manual to bring the two into alignment. The main proposals were to introduce penalties for late submissions for online controlled condition examinations and clarification of upload requirements for students with reasonable adjustments. Further changes were outlined in the paper.
- 6.3. **Approved:** paper 1-05 (22-23), the Student Regulations for Examinations and Assessment 2022-23.

7. Admissions

- 7.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 1-06 (22-23) presented by Ms Bella Malins, Director of Access and Admissions (SRS).

- 7.2. EdCom was informed of an anticipated overshoot of around 800 students for both undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) intake targets. Postgraduate research (PGR) numbers were similar to previous years and not expected to exceed targets. The increase in taught student numbers could lead to additional pressure on timetabling, teaching, learning resources and student support, which risked higher student and staff dissatisfaction and increased complaints.
 - 7.3. Although UCL made less UG and PGT offers than in previous years, more students had accepted offers than forecast. UG level may have been affected by UK demographic changes with increased 18 year olds and continuing uncertainty with A level grades. However, international conversion rates had also increased, perhaps due to UCL's high reputation. PGT figures were harder to model due to UCL operating in a global market and not knowing where else students applied. Global events could affect recruitment.
 - 7.4. Consideration was being given to eliminating over-recruitment in future. This included adjusting UCL's modelling approach and algorithms which used previous years' data, stable until now, to forecast likely numbers. It was also important to improve offer-making discipline institutionally and at local level. Predicting PGT conversion rates could also be helped by extending the offer acceptance deposit scheme to all programmes. Many institutions used this approach as it encouraged greater commitment in accepting offers by students and improved number forecasting.
- 8. National Student Survey**
- 8.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 1-07 (22-23) introduced by the Chair.
 - 8.2. The paper followed the National Student Survey (NSS) 2022 results paper discussed at the July EdCom meeting, with more detailed data analysis. This included trend data, comparisons with the sector and Russell Group, subject-level performance and student comments, with outlined actions to be taken in response. The paper would be further submitted to UMC and UCL Council.
 - 8.3. EdCom noted that Faculty Deans were asked to focus on large programmes with the most dissatisfaction and to summarise actions taken in their Faculty Education Plans (FEP). The highest area of concern again was Assessment and Feedback (A&F), with UCL placed 138 from 142 institutions. This would affect the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission with UCL now unlikely to achieve Gold status.
 - 8.4. It was important to address student A&F concerns, particularly around clarity of marking criteria, promptness of the return of work and assessment timing. Many students complained that they often worked on subsequent assessments before receiving feedback on earlier work, which made improvement difficult. Students also did not always recognise feedback, such as from personal tutors, so it was important to use consistent terminology. It was hoped that the module dialogue process would flag problems earlier to enable departments to address them.

- 8.5. It was suggested that further thought was given to the volume of assessment. There was a tendency at UCL to over-assess which students found stressful and was not always pedagogically beneficial. Many new programme proposals required greater scrutiny on the amount of assessment intended. Over-assessment was included in strategic discussions, but should also be considered in the new Departmental Education Plans (DEP). EdCom was also informed of a MAPS Faculty project to improve A&F definitions and clarify expectations, ensuring greater consistency for students and staff. Providing simplified and clear A&F guidance across all faculties would be helpful. The MAPS Faculty Tutor offered to share the project document with EdCom.

Action: Zak Liddell and the Secretary

- 8.6. **Approved:** the paper at EDCOM 1-07 (22-23). EdCom agreed that Appendix 4 should be removed from the paper before submission to UCL Council.

Action: the Chair and Ms Sally Mackenzie

9. Teaching Excellence Framework Update

- 9.1. Approved - the paper at EDCOM 1-08 (22-23) introduced by Ms Lizzie Vinton, Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Lead.

- 9.2. The TEF Steering Group held its first meeting in September 2022 and smaller task groups were being established to work on individual sections of the TEF narrative. Help may be required from faculties to provide examples of how problems and issues were being addressed locally, for example in response to A&F student feedback.

Agreed: that EdCom members contact the TEF lead if they are able to help provide information on local initiatives to support the TEF narrative.

Action: EdCom members to note

- 9.3. UCL expected to receive final TEF instructions from the Office for Students (OfS) and UCL's data and benchmarks at the end of September 2022. It was difficult to predict the TEF outcome prior to the receipt of OfS data, though UCL's good student outcome data, careers and Grand Challenges initiatives should contribute positively. Student satisfaction data would be more difficult, with focus likely on A&F. The SU were also being supported in producing their submission, with access to the necessary data and information.

10. Proposals Arising from the Review of Education-Related Committees

- 10.1. Received the paper at EDCOM 1-09 (22-23) introduced by the Chair. The paper outlined proposals to improve UCL education-related committees and sub-committees and cycles of quality review, specifically the Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) and Internal Quality Review (IQR) processes. This followed previous EdCom discussion (EdCom Minute 104, 19.07.22).

- 10.2. The review was not intended to change EdCom's terms of reference, but to ensure it received the essential information from its sub-committees to discharge its responsibilities and place the student voice at the centre of decision-making. The proposals would also ensure better alignment of quality reviews with key data releases, with more targeted processes reducing departmental burdens.
- 10.3. The report proposed that Faculty Teaching Committees (FTC) Chairs be members of EdCom as the senior faculty education leads. However, there was variable practice across UCL and FTCs could be chaired by Vice Deans (Education), Faculty Tutors, Faculty Deans or other senior staff. Whilst it was important that a senior FTC member attend EdCom, it was suggested that flexibility be retained. There was general agreement with re-naming FTCs as "Faculty Education Committees", though this required further discussion as changes would be needed to the Academic Manual ([Chapter 13: Faculty and Departmental Committees](#)).
Agreed: to amend the proposal to state that the "Chair of the FTC or their nominee" should be a member of EdCom.
- 10.4. It was proposed that an overarching Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) be formed from ARQASC and the Quality Review Sub-Committee (QRSC), to have oversight of quality assurance processes and provide EdCom with timely and concise information. This would enable a unified focus on quality assurance and it was suggested that QSC be empowered to take decisions to save EdCom time.
Agreed: to merge ARQASC and QRSC to form the QSC.
Action: Sarah Cowls and Professor Norbert Pachler to oversee work required
- 10.5. It was proposed to re-purpose the Student Experience Committee (StEC) as the Staff-Student Partnership Committee (SSPC), reporting to EdCom on the student experience of education. It was queried whether membership would comprise of similar numbers of staff and students as at StEC, though this required further discussion. The proposal for a Student Life Committee (SLC) to consider the broader student experience was positively received as there was no current forum for these areas. It was suggested that the SLC report to UMC.
Agreed: to establish the SSPC in place of StEC and set up the new SLC.
- 10.6. Widening Participation (WP) was currently covered by the Student Recruitment Admissions and Funding Committee (StRAFC), but was out of line with OfS regulatory requirement that institutions should have WP oversight throughout the student lifecycle. It was proposed to create a new Student Access and Success Committee (StASC) to cover this and the Access and Participation Plan. StASC would cover work to address awarding gaps and split-metrics, building on previous activity including that of the BAME Attainment Gap working group.
- 10.7. The paper proposed adopting a risk based approach to the IQR process, focussing on departments where student data showed a number of issues to be addressed.
Agreed: that risks around degree apprenticeships in some departments are taken into account as the IQR policy is developed (particularly as they were subject to Ofsted review).

- 10.8. The ASER process also required refreshing to minimise the administrative burden, align it better with academic planning and publication of the key datasets such as the NSS and the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS). The proposed DEP would enable departments to focus on key issues, with specific targets for action.
- 10.9. A number of suggestions were raised on ASER in the discussion:
- a) Consideration should be given to changing the ASER name. "Annual" implied once a year, so not all departments saw ASER as an on-going exercise. The revised process should also ensure that partnership with students continued, a positive feature of the current process.
 - b) As part of the on-going process, ensure departments understood that feedback data would come at different points in the year (e.g. the new PGT NSS would be released in August). DEPs should also refer to Continuous Module Review feedback.
 - c) The proposed DEP template should be clear in its expectations of departments and provide examples. The data provided should be easily digestible management information, with clear suggested areas for departments to focus on. The DEP should also enable identification of good practice to enable sharing with faculties and UCL.
 - d) Improved data visualisation would be vital for any future quality and standards processes such as ASER. The current tableau reporting for ASER was noted as being cumbersome and lacked sector/institutional benchmarking.
 - e) DEP Oversight needed to be clear and it was suggested that FTCs ensure departments complete them and discuss the main issues arising. Faculties should then report faculty level issues, concerns and good practice to EdCom, for institutional oversight.
- 10.10. Departments were expecting to work on ASER this term and swift communications were proposed to inform them of the ASER reforms and that the revised process would be introduced in the Summer Term. In the meantime, it was important that faculties and departments continued to work on the FEPs and the actions identified. This activity should be noted by FTCs and Departmental Teaching Committees.
Agreed: that clear communications would be provided to departments explaining that ASER would not be taking place in 2022/23 and would instead be replaced with the Faculty Education Plans and then the Department Education Plans in the summer of 2023.
- 10.11. There was general approval of the committee diagram (Appendix A in the paper) though it was queried whether this would be made widely available to improve visibility and wider understanding of the EdCom structure. It might also help to include the proposed semesterisation working groups.
- 10.12. **Approved:** the paper at EDCOM 1-09 (22-23), subject to the EdCom discussion above.
Action: Ms Sarah Cows

11. UCL Student Engagement Monitoring Policy 2022-23

- 11.1. Received the paper at EDCOM 1-09 (22-23) introduced by Ms Sarah Cowls, Executive Director of Student Services and Registrar.
- 11.2. The paper provided a revised policy for monitoring student engagement on programmes of study. UCL had begun to introduce card readers linked to [RegisterUCL](#), the platform for logging and monitoring student attendance. However, they were already becoming obsolete and were sub-optimal for taking attendance, particularly in larger lecture theatres. The policy thus allows the mode of monitoring to vary across UCL with faculties to decide. A new system using electronic check-in, such as through Eduroam or beacons, would be introduced for 2023-24.
- 11.3. **Approved** – the paper at EDCOM 1-10 (22-23).
Action: Sarah Cowls to note

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1. None received.

13. Dates of Next Meeting

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

- Tuesday, 18 October 2022, 14.00 - 16:30
- 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

Rob Traynor (Interim Secretary)

Policy Advisor (Education Governance)

Academic Services

Email: r.traynor@ucl.ac.uk

7 October 2022