



Education Committee

23 February 2021

Confirmed Minutes

Present:

Professor Anthony Smith (Chair)

Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Simon Banks; Mr Ayman Benmati; Professor Clare Brooks; Ms Yasmeen Daoud; Mr Ian Davis; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce; Ms Megan Gerrie; Professor Deborah Gill; Professor Alistair Greig; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Jane Holder; Ms Gunay Karimova; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Ms Viktoria Makai; Dr Helen Matthews; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Mr Derfel Owen; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Bill Sillar; Professor Sam Smidt; Dr Hazel Smith; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Professor Olga Thomas and Ms Lizzie Vinton.

In attendance: Ms Katie Price; Ms Joanne Moles and Professor Simon Walker (Item 42); Professor John Mitchell (Item 43), Dr Anne Preston (Item 44), Ms Karen Roberts and Mr Rosul Gazi (Item 45), Professor Sasha Roseneil (Item 46) and Mr Rob Traynor (Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from: Professor Nora Colton and Ms June Hedges.

Part I: Preliminary Business

40. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 40.1. Approved – the Minutes of the previous EdCom meetings held on:
- 3 December 2020 [EdCom Minutes 22-39, 2020-21] at EDCOM 3-01 (20-21)
 - 5 February 2021 [EdCom Extraordinary Meeting Minutes 1-7, 2020-21] at EDCOM 3-02 (20-21).

41. Matters Arising from the Minutes

41A Amendment to Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2020-21 [EdCom Minute 22, 03.12.20]

41A.1 Amendments to EdCom's terms of reference were made following an Academic Board (AB) Special Meeting (14 July 2020). EdCom requested further clarification of the academic powers delegated from AB and of the additional membership.

41A.2 The Secretary reported the following:

- AB officers confirmed that the delegated powers to EdCom related to how Council would receive advice from EdCom on academic matters and UCL

educational policy, as stated in the new Term of Reference 1. The delegated powers did not refer to formal processes such as the approval of new types of award. Council further considered the delegated powers at its February meeting and EdCom would be informed of any further changes to the terms of reference.

- Reporting arrangements: EdCom now submitted its minutes to AB and would submit an annual report on the use of the delegated powers each session.
- New academic members staggered terms of service: AB officers were discussing this suggestion with the Governance Sub-Committee of AB (GCAB) and would clarify soon. AB to run elections for the new members.

41A.3 **Noted** - Further clarification on the AB delegated powers and the new academic members to be reported to EdCom once received.

41B Entry Tariff Anomalies

(EdCom Minute 24A, 3 December 2020)

41B.1 EdCom had discussed problems with the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) entry tariff data which could present a misleading picture on the Office for Students' (OfS) [Unistats](#) website for prospective undergraduate (UG) students and in [UK league tables](#). It was not possible for the Chair to discuss this with the Russell Group due to more pressing concerns with student assessment and the pandemic. AS officers were advised to pursue the issue through other avenues.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

42. AssessmentUCL: Digital Assessment Project Update (Standing Agenda Item)

- 42.1. The Examinations Manager (AS) and the Academic Lead, UCL Arena provided the regular update on AssessmentUCL, the Digital Assessment Project (DAP).
- 42.2. EdCom noted the following:
- a) Phase 2 (proof of concept) was now complete with AssessmentUCL, the platform from provider's UNIwise, tested and procured. All students would use AssessmentUCL for centrally managed exams, though there would be no change to the assessment setting for academics from last year (i.e. exam paper pdfs to be submitted and collated on the AssessmentUCL platform).
 - b) A pilot to develop end-to-end live assessments would be held in Term 3 to more fully test functionality and align the platform with SITS/Portico. Departments could still join the pilot, subject to their assessment being held during Term 3.
 - c) Training would be provided and though not mandatory, colleagues strongly encouraged to participate. Additional support would be provided by Digital Education, faculty learning technologists and Arena. An Academic Steering Group was set up to provide academic input and provide oversight.
 - d) The default exam setting would be 24 hours for the student to submit the assessment, unless they were taking a timed exam when the clock started once the exam is accessed. Students would have an additional hour to submit at the

end in case of any technical difficulties. Students with Summary of Reasonable Adjustments (SORA) would have 24 hours to submit.

- e) Phase 4 would involve on-boarding the departments using the platform this year, integrating AssessmentUCL with SITS for grade integration and working with the supplier and other institutions on further developments.

42.3. The presentation slides are available on the EdCom MS Teams site and SharePoint.

43. Year Zero Widening Participation Programme Structure

43.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-03 (20-21) introduced by Professor John Mitchell, Vice-Dean Education, Faculty of Engineering Sciences.

43.2. EdCom was asked to approve in principle a proposed framework for year-zero programmes offering students from non-traditional backgrounds a foundation year into UG programmes. This aimed to bridge the gap between prior learning and degree study, for students not yet meeting full UG entry requirements. It would be non-credit bearing and fit with wider UCL widening participation activities, offering a different route for disadvantaged students, or those returning to education after a long break. Students should be able to access loans from the Student Loans Company, which viewed it as an additional year for Engineering's 3 to 4 year programmes.

43.3. The discussion noted the importance of setting entry requirements at the right level, in order to avoid the experience of some widening participation schemes where student attainment and progression was a concern. This should be a key measure once students progressed to the full degree programmes, with student outcomes either equivalent to or above the students entering the programmes by traditional routes. The programme was advised to also liaise with the Black, Asia and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Awarding Gap Group to factor in its findings.

43.4. **Agreed** - that EdCom approves in principle the proposed framework for year-zero programmes. The programme would then require scrutiny by the Programme and Module Approval Panel (PMAP) before EdCom approval.

Action – Professor Mitchell to note

44. UCL East Suite of Optional Modules for PGT Programmes

44.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-04 (20-21) introduced by Dr Anne Preston UCL Associate Professor (Teaching).

44.2. The paper outlined supporting processes and mechanisms for a suite of 15 credit optional modules for all postgraduate taught (PGT) programmes delivered at UCL East. EdCom was asked to approve the modules in principle and support the operational characteristics required by PMAP, as well proposals for their institutional sustainability and leadership.

- 44.3. The discussion raised a number of concerns, queries and suggestions, including:
- a) Whether already approved UCL East programmes might be adapted to incorporate the proposed optional modules. This would avoid any over-proliferation of programmes and modules and aid their sustainability.
 - b) Programme complexity: the new Provost had stated that complexity in UCL programmes should be reduced, with fewer, self-contained programmes and options more clearly linked to programmes. Modules also needed to be deliverable to account for any physical restrictions in place due to the pandemic.
 - c) Whether the proposed modules would appeal to students to ensure good recruitment. EdCom noted that UCL East had recruited student interns to research this and that students contributed to curriculum design.
 - d) Concerns with the sustainability of the proposed governance and Steering Group oversight. This was complex with each module homed, unavoidably, in various departments and faculties. Good governance was essential, not least to ensure other students' access to the shared modules.
- 44.4. **Agreed:** that UCL East give further consideration to the proposed modules and whether they might fit with already approved UCL East programmes and modules.
Action: Dr Anne Preston and UCL East Officers

45. UCL Student Attendance Policy

- 45.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-05 (20-21) introduced by Ms Karen Roberts and Mr Rosul Gazi, the Here to Succeed Policy Managers (Student and Registry Services) and the Registrar. Development of the policy was previously noted by EdCom in June 2020 (Minute 70, 08.06.2020), when EdCom agreed to continue suspension of the 70% attendance requirement due to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- 45.2. The paper outlined the proposed attendance policy to underpin the introduction of the new digital monitoring solution for implementation in 2021-22. The policy aimed to provide detailed information and guidance on the process and management of "RegisterUCL", the student attendance recording system for UG and PGT students.
- 45.3. EdCom discussed the proposal for faculties to be responsible for deciding minimum attendance requirements for their departments and suggested that Faculty Teaching Committees (FTC) decide this to encourage consistency. However, this could lead to variation in practice, with some faculties adopting a unified approach for all departments, but others not (i.e. faculties with professionally accredited programmes with strict attendance requirements might find a uniformity difficult).
- 45.4. EdCom noted that AS was not able to maintain the faculty wide variation for attendance thresholds in the Academic Manual and suggested that a page link to faculty webpages showing their approaches instead. Faculties would be responsible for keeping this information updated. The Here to Succeed project had previously proposed options for attendance thresholds and offered to provide FTCs with them to

help discussions on faculty approach. The Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (ARQASC) would need to review Learning Agreements and Barring regulations to ensure alignment with the revised attendance policy.

- 45.5. It was suggested that a “road map” be developed by the Here to Succeed officers to outline the implementation process and ensure that any academic impact had been addressed. This might be further discussed by the Faculty Tutor Forum.
- 45.6. **Agreed:** that EdCom approves in principle the student attendance policy, subject to (i) review by ARQASC of the Learning Agreements and Barring regulations; (ii) development of a “road map” outlining the implementation process and (iii) an academic impact statement. The road map and the academic impact statement to be considered at the next meeting.

Action: ARQASC Officers, the Registrar and Here to Succeed Officers

46. Modern Foreign Language Requirement

- 46.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-06 (20-21) presented by the Director of AS.
- 46.2. The paper outlined the academic outcomes of the Modern Foreign Language (MFL) requirement and proposed to suspend it pending development of a new scheme to promote language acquisition. The proposals received prior ARQASC consideration and input from the Centre for Languages and International Education (CLIE).
- 46.3. The MFL was problematic in its current form as outcomes were poor and it was perceived as a regulatory hurdle rather than an opportunity to access UCL’s wealth of language teaching. The MFL regulation was also difficult to enforce in relation to the COVID 19 mitigation measures taken by UCL and was often an additional source of stress to students. The Senior Management Team (SMT) had previously noted that the MFL requirement disproportionately affected students from disadvantaged backgrounds and might deter applications to UCL.
- 46.4. The paper outlined a number of ways that a more ambitious and positive MFL approach might be taken in a future Education Strategy, with it seen as a ‘commitment’ for ‘pledge’ rather than regulatory requirement. A number of other universities had taken this approach and offered excellent co-curricular additional language learning, which could be developed at UCL.
- 46.5. **Approved** – the proposals to suspend the MFL regulation with immediate effect and to develop an improved commitment to languages in the context of the next Education Strategy.

47. Teaching Operation Model and Academic Planning

- 47.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-07 (20-21) presented by Professor Deborah Gill, Pro-Vice-Provost: Student Experience and Professor Norbert Pachler, Pro-Vice-Provost: Digital Education.
- 47.2. The paper outlined the single Operating Model plans for the wider re-opening of UCL in the next session. It sought to establish principles for the delivery of educational activities, informing a framework for departments to plan their programmes for next session. The paper was written before the Government's 22 February announcement of its "road map" for gradual easing of pandemic restrictions. EdCom was thus not asked to approve the paper, but rather to discuss its key matters, for further consideration by AB at its meeting on 3 March 2021.
- 47.3. Planning for opening up the campus was very difficult as decisions were required some time in advance of Term 1 2020-21. It was unknown whether COVID 19 would continue to decline and vaccines prove effective, or if it would increase again. The paper focussed on class sizes and social distancing and the use of blended education and assumed student return to campus for at least some of the time.
- 47.4. The following points were noted in the discussion:
 - a) Safety on campus was paramount and adherence to social distancing measures and other measures still necessary. This was a key constraint as safe opening put limits on the numbers of students on campus. The paper assumed that the current 2 metres would continue, though modelling for other distancing was also conducted by UCL Estates. There was a risk that acting too conservatively could leave UCL at odds with wider society should that open up more fully.
 - b) However, UCL risked student discontent if face to face teaching and greater campus access was promised but worsening circumstances then prevented it. A cautious approach of "offering less but delivering more" was suggested.
 - c) It was noted that much teaching was not timetabled, e.g., research projects requiring laboratory access, and should also be factored into decisions. Students also required study space, which might be needed to access online lectures should they already be on campus for other scheduled teaching.
 - d) The suggestion for a blended education approach with continued online teaching and some face-to-face teaching was considered sensible overall. However, it raised practical questions on how it would work, e.g. just for smaller groups or also for larger lectures. It was also queried whether remote learning would be offered to students unable to attend UCL, e.g. those shielding or unable to leave their home countries.
 - e) Concerns were raised regarding the possible impact on staff work-loads and resources should lectures require repeated delivery. This would be heightened should dual delivery of online and face-to-face teaching be required (though this would not be offered unless the circumstances changed).

- f) Decisions were required soon to enable departments to plan teaching, set modules and timetables and book rooms. It was queried whether deadlines might be delayed, e.g. for module confirmation, to allow for further discussion. However, EdCom noted that the deadline for module confirmation was already delayed and any refinement would be conducted iteratively to ensure that programme diets were built in time for the start of session.
- g) A light touch information collection would be conducted with Estates to gather department views on teaching delivery and likely needs. This included identification of key parts of modules that required face-to-face teaching.

47.5. **Agreed** - that a blended education approach would be necessary for the next session for students returning to UCL. However, further thought was required for the support to be provided to students unable to come. UCL should endeavour to provide this where possible, but honesty was required where it was not, despite best endeavours. The Pro-Vice-Provost: Student Experience and Pro-Vice-Provost: Digital Education would inform AB of the EdCom discussion.

Action: Professor Deborah Gill and Professor Norbert Pachler to note

48. Postgraduate Taught Classification Outcomes

- 48.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-08 (20-21) presented by the Director of AS.
- 48.2. The paper outlined analysis of PGT degree classifications data in 2020 to assess the impact of the 'No Detriment' policy used to determine classifications, with a summary of relevant External Examiner (EE) comments. Further details relating to the awarding gaps was available in the [ASER dataset](#) in Tableau.
- 48.3. EdCom was informed that the overall proportion of distinctions increased significantly compared to previous years, with a decrease in the numbers of awards in the other classes. Analysis of the mark profile attributed the change in classification profile to the application of the No Detriment classification algorithm rather than to changes in student performance. More detailed analysis of the EE comments in relation to Covid-19 mitigation was underway, though the report highlighted some comments questioning whether it was over generous.
- 48.4. EdCom was informed of some student dissatisfaction with this year's "No Detriment" mitigation, in particular that the 2019-20 classification mitigation would not be used. However, it was noted that the current policy offered much support for students.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

49. Approval of New Programmes of Study

- 49.1. Approved - programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 3-09 (20-21).

50. Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

50.1. Approved the minutes of PMAP held on 5 November 2021 at EDCOM 3-10 (20-21).

50.2. Approved the minutes of PMAP held on 10 December 2021 at EDCOM 3-11 (20-21).

51. Suspensions of Regulations

51.1. Approved – the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 3-12 (20-21).

52. Any Other Business

53A Surgical and Interventional Sciences Exam Board Mitigation

53A.1 Received – the late paper 3-13 (20-21) from Ms Chandan Shah, Policy Advisor, AS. EdCom was asked to approve mitigating action taken by the Surgical and Interventional Sciences Exam Board for non-attendance of an External Examiner (EE), unable to attend due to NHS clinical commitments (related to COVID 19). The Exam Board followed the regulations outlined in Chapter 4, Academic Manual and appointed an experienced internal examiner to undertake the EE role.

53A.2 Approved – the mitigation action undertaken by the Surgical and Interventional Sciences Exam Board as outlined in Paper 3-13 (20-21).

53B Thanks to Departing Chair

53B.1 EdCom noted that Professor Anthony Smith would be taking on a new role as Vice-Provost (Faculties), as part of changes introduced by the new Provost and President and would step down as Chair. The next meeting would be chaired by Professor Deborah Gill, as Interim Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs).

53B.2 Members thanked Professor Smith for his excellent service and leadership of the Committee over the last decade and wished him the best of success for his new role.

53. Dates of Next Meeting

53.1. The dates of the EdCom meetings for the rest of the 2020-21 session are:

- Tuesday 27 April 2021 10.30am
- Thursday 10 June 2021 10.30am
- RESERVED MEETING Thursday 22 July 2021 10.30am

Meetings to be held on MS Teams.

Rob Traynor

Secretary to EdCom

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22 March 2021