



## Education Committee

### Extraordinary Meeting

24 July 2023

### Minutes (Confirmed)

#### Present

Professor Kathleen Armour (Chair)

Dr Ali Abolfathi; Professor Simon Banks; Ms Karen Barnard; Dr Nicole Brown; Mr Shaban Chaudhary; Mr Ian Davis; Professor Sally Day; Mr Daniel Farrell; Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce; Mr Matteo Fumagalli; Ms Marie Gallagher; Professor Katherine Holt; Mr Ahmad Ismail; Dr Rachel King; Mr Zak Liddell; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Mary Richardson; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Hazel Smith; Ms Issy Smith; Ms Lizzie Vinton; Dr Nalini Vittal; Professor Nicola Walshe, Dr Kathryn Woods and Professor Stan Zochowski.

**In attendance:** Dr Jennifer McGowan; Professor Eloise Scotford (on behalf of Professor Olga Thomas); Professor David Shanks (on behalf of Dr Julie Evans); Mr Ashley Doolan (Secretary).

**Apologies:** Dr Julie Evans; Ms June Hedges; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Olga Thomas,

### Part I: Preliminary Business

#### 103. Welcome and Announcements

103.1. The Chair welcomed members to the extraordinary meeting and thanked them for attending at short notice. The Chair explained that the meeting was called following a direction from Council which, noting a report from the Academic Committee on the latest undergraduate progression and award outcomes data, and the impact of the Marking and Assessment Boycott on those outcomes, was sufficiently concerned to ask the Education Committee to consider taking further action within its powers.

### Part II: Matters for Discussion

#### 104. Marking and Assessment Boycott – Undergraduate Progression

104.1. Received - a paper at EDCOMEX 9-01 (22-23) presented by the Director of Education Services outlining the sequence of reporting from Academic Committee to Council, and the subsequent instruction from Council for Education Committee to:

- i. ensure it considers all powers available to it and others, within UCL's Academic Manual (and its annexes) and related Marking and Assessment Boycott: Regulatory & Process Guidance for Boards of Examiners 2022-23 (Guidance) and to take such

actions as may be deemed necessary, to ensure the progression (provisional or otherwise) of all applicable students; and

- ii. to require Education Committee to report to Council by 27th July on actions taken to resolve the issues and concerns raised in this Paper to provide assurance to Council that all legal and regulatory obligations UCL has towards its students and its regulators are being fulfilled.

104.2. EdCom noted that at the time of the first results day on 6 July, 341 undergraduate students were not able to progress due to the impacts of the MAB. Since that date, a considerable amount of work had been done within departments and faculties to progress or provisionally progress as many students as possible, however there were still students who would not currently return to commence their next year of study in 2023/24, due to factors beyond their control.

104.3. It was proposed to make a permanent change to the provisional progression regulations, which could both be used to enable currently affected students to return to commence their next year of study in 2023/24 but could also be used in other situations where it has not been possible to confirm a student's progression due to factors beyond that student's control that have prevented the consideration of their academic attainment within the normal timelines. The Chair asked members to consider the following aspects when considering this amendment:

- i. Any progression decision made using this power would be provisional and would still be impacted by subsequent failures should they be confirmed following the receipt of missing marks. Academic standards would not be weakened to enable students to avoid subsequent consequences of failure, such as the need to complete reassessment for failed components.
- ii. UCL has consistently high progression rates (98.2% in 2021/22) so the risk associated with the decision to provisionally progress a student is low.
- iii. A student will not be provisionally progressed if they have a failure in their mark profile that would require them to complete reassessment.
- iv. In the absence of the evidence of failure, and considering the factors above, it would be difficult to defend the decision to prevent a student's provisional progression, particularly when the student is not responsible for the factors that are preventing their progression.

104.4. In considering the proposed amendment, several points were raised and discussed, including the following:

- i. That while concerns remained about the possibility of some missing marks never materialising, it was clear that at some point the MAB would end and, at that point, staff would be asked to prioritise returning all outstanding marks, in line with their contracts.
- ii. That it was important that Education Committee retained the authority to approve provisional progression in these cases to align with existing precedents elsewhere in the regulations, and within the existing provisional progression regulations of the levels of authority delegated to faculties and departments.

- iii. That a decision to progress a student provisionally did not override the academic judgement of the Board of Examiners as they would, at some future point, still rule on the student's actual progression outcome, following the receipt of outstanding marks.
- iv. That a package of financial compensation for students who subsequently discover they have failed to progress and have incurred costs associated with a year of study that they would not normally have been asked to attend, should be explored, and confirmed as a matter of urgency.
- v. That a provisional progression decision is not normally based on whether a student has met learning outcomes but whether they are likely to do so later.

104.5. **Approved** – the proposal at EDCOMEX 9-01 (22-23) by majority vote. It was noted that the provisional progression of all outstanding students would be processed within Portico in time for the 27 July 2023 results day, and that Council would be updated on this decision.

### **105. Marking and Assessment Boycott – Undergraduate Award**

105.1. Received - a paper at EDCOMEX 9-02 (22-23) presented by the Director of Education Services outlining the sequence of reporting from Academic Committee to Council, and the subsequent instruction from Council for Education Committee to:

- i. in line with its terms of reference, ensure that all relevant provisions of UCL's Academic Manual (and its annexes) and related Marking and Assessment Boycott: Regulatory & Process Guidance for Boards of Examiners 2022-23 (Guidance) are utilised and properly deployed, with the aim of ensuring that when decisions are being made, students across UCL are treated consistently, equitably and fairly in order to adhere to UCL's legal and regulatory obligations and to take such actions as may be deemed necessary; and
- ii. require Education Committee to report to Council by 27th July on actions taken to resolve the issues and concerns raised in this Paper to provide assurance to Council that all legal and regulatory obligations UCL has towards its students and its regulators are being fulfilled.

105.2. EdCom was asked to note that the resolution it was asked to endorse would instruct faculties, through their Faculty Boards of Examiners, to take all actions available to them to enable their Boards of Examiners to resolve as many outstanding student awards as possible. This may include:

- i. Reallocation of marking to other internal examiners appointed to the Board of Examiners.
- ii. Discussion with their Boards of Examiners where there are cases where an award may be possible within existing regulations and approved mitigations, to ascertain whether detailed scrutiny of the student's attainment of the programme learning outcomes has been conducted.
- iii. Where applicable, applications for suspensions of regulations to enable the award of students where the Board of Examiners agrees this is appropriate.

- iv. Where necessary, formally entering dispute with a Board of Examiners to enable the establishment of a Special Case Panel to conduct a third-party review of decisions taken, and where necessary, to uphold or overturn these decisions.

105.3. In discussion, it was noted that there would be a limit to what could be achieved through governance, and that some matters would be more appropriately dealt with through line management, such as gaining access to exam scripts or marking rubrics. It was also noted that some decisions, such as whether to make use of single marks, would need to be made locally, as EdCom was not sufficiently close to the detail of the individual assessments to judge whether that would be appropriate. It was acknowledged that in some instances, Boards of Examiners may need to appoint new internal examiners, where they were felt to be appropriately qualified, to ensure that marking could be reallocated to subject experts. Finally, it was confirmed that Chairs could make decisions on behalf of their Boards of Examiners if those decisions are reported to the next full meeting of the Board.

105.4. **Approved** – the proposal at EDCOMEX 9-02 (22-23) by majority vote.

### **Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information**

#### **106. Any Other Business**

106.1. EdCom received a request for clarification from a member on the process that should be followed if an examiner has failed to produce an examination paper for the late summer assessment period due to suspected participation in the MAB, The Chair confirmed that this was a line management issue in the first instance, and that EdCom would only take action to mitigate where an assessment did not take place, as is outlined in existing guidance related to mitigation for lost teaching or assessment events.

#### **107. Dates of Next Meeting**

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

- Tuesday 25 July 2023, 14:00 - 16:30

Ashley Doolan (EdCom Secretary)  
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Education Services, Email: [a.doolan@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.doolan@ucl.ac.uk)

July 2023