CONFIRMED

LONDON'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

25 February 2019

M I N U T E S

Present:
Professor Anthony Smith (Chair);
Dr Tracey Allen; Ms Stefanie Anyadi; Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Simon Banks; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Ms June Hedges; Dr Arne Hofmann; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Helen Matthews; Professor Tim McHugh; Mr Derfel Owen; Mr Saddiqur Rahman; Dr Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Sam Smidt; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Eva Sorensen and Dr Fiona Strawbridge.

In attendance: Lizzie Vinton (Secretary); Joanne Moles for item 7; Anniina Wikman for items 9 and 10; Darren Payne for item 14; Tim Beasley-Murray for item 15.

Apologies were received from: Ms Rothna Akhtar; Mr Ian Davis; Dr Sandra Leaton Gray; Professor Norbert Pachler; Dr Mike Porter and Ms Olga Thomas

Key to abbreviations

AC	Academic Committee
ARQASC	Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub Committee
EC	Extenuating Circumstances
EdCom	Education Committee
HEAR	Higher Education Achievement Report
OVPESA	Office of the Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs)
OfS	Office for Students
NSS	National Student Survey
PGT	Taught Postgraduate
PMAP	Programme and Module Approval Panel
PTES	Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
StRAFC	Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee
SU	Students' Union
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
UKSCQA	UK Standing Committee on Quality Assurance
UoL	University of London
VP	Vice-Provost

PART I: PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

36 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING
(EdCom Minutes 18-35, 6 December 2018)

37 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

37A Higher Education Achievement Report – Guiding Principles
(EdCom Minutes 19B, 6 December 2018)

37A.1 On 2 October 2018 EdCom agreed to allow Faculty-approved placements, internships and other work-related activity to be included in the UCL HEAR Guiding Principles. Since then, UCL Careers had asked if internships managed and offered by UCL Careers could also be permitted. ARQASC had discussed the matter in detail and approved the proposal.

PART II: MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

38 TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK: SUBJECT LEVEL UPDATE AND INDEPENDENT REVIEW

38.1 **Received** – an oral update on the Subject-level TEF from the Director of Education Planning.

38.2 The Subject-level TEF pilot had now been submitted, including 26 subject-level narratives and an updated institutional submission reflecting the most recent data. This had been an exceptionally useful exercise not only in preparing for the live subject-level TEF but also in helping departments to interrogate and articulate their provision. The drafting and feedback process had been particularly helpful to departments. The most challenging aspect had been finding ways to evidence impact, and this would benefit from further exploration in any future iterations. Confidential pilot outcomes were expected in June or July and each subject submission would be rated as Bronze, Silver or Gold.

38.3 **Received** – UCL's Response to the Independent Review of TEF's Call for Views at EDCOM 3-01 (18-19), presented by the Director of Education Planning.

38.4 The OfS were consulting on the future of the TEF and whether the Subject-level version would be adopted across the sector. UCL's President and Provost had submitted a response on the institution's behalf, with the approval of AC. This included positive feedback on the metrics and benchmarking aspects, but some reservations about the enhancement benefits of the exercise, and a suggestion that the process should move towards evaluating student outcomes rather than teaching quality.

38.5 EdCom thanked all of the staff who had been involved, both in departments and in the Careers, Arena, Academic Services and OVPESA teams, for their hard work in achieving such a positive outcome.

39 EXAM BOARD REPORTS

39.1 **Received** – the papers at EDCOM 3-02 (18-19) presented by the Head of Academic Policy and Quality Assurance.

39.2 EdCom received an update on the Academic Model Project's plans to introduce new 'touch-of-a-button' exam board reports which would apply UCL's recently-revised regulations fairly and accurately to all students from the summer of 2019. Extensive consultation had taken place with staff to ensure that the new reports and systems gave departments the tools to operate exam boards effectively, and the final designs were now being presented to EdCom for approval. The opportunity had been taken to revise some of the Academic Manual annexes, such as the exam board checklist and template agenda, and the faculty observer guidelines and proforma. Work was also underway to consult with external examiners and departmental staff on statistical reports for boards' analysis – for this first year, only simple statistical data would be made available with a view to expanding this function the following year.

39.3 The consultation had highlighted departments' lack of trust in the system, which had been sub-optimal for many years. In response, additional resources and reports would be made available for departments to verify data and calculations, and build up confidence in the system. A testing period was now underway and would be crucial in highlighting any lacunae before the reports were fully operational in June. It was expected that, once there was more confidence in the system's capabilities, these additional tools would no longer be needed.

39.4 The consultation responses included a number of requests for reports showing student names. Whilst in some cases a legitimate reason was given (such as decisions concerning the award of prizes, which are not based solely on academic performance) there appeared to be a reluctance in some areas to acknowledge the requirement that Exam Boards are conducted anonymously. EdCom noted the importance of assuring students that their assessment would only be based on the quality of their work, and not other factors which might be subject to bias, however unconscious. It was recognised that some internal examiners would be able to link marks to individual candidates, but this was not adequate reason to suspend anonymity for the whole board.

39.5 **Agreed** - Education Committee reaffirmed the principle that all assessment processes, including marking, second-marking, moderation and the decisions of Boards of Examiners, should be conducted anonymously unless the nature of the assessment made this impossible (as set out in the Overarching Principles of Assessment 1.1.26 and in the regulations for Boards of Examiners 13.2.4). Departments were also encouraged to use Pre-Boards for confidential discussions on complex cases amongst a restricted group (for example where there were Extenuating Circumstances), and which did not have an anonymity requirement.

39.6 **Approved** - The final designs for the single suite of reports to be used for the 2018/19 examination boards.

39.7 **Approved** – In-session changes to the 2018-19 iteration of the UCL Academic Manual Annex 4.3.2 Standard Board of Examiners Checklist and Agenda; Annex 4.3.3 Guidelines for Faculty Representatives at Board of Examiners Meetings; and Annex 4.3.4: Proforma for Faculty Representative Report.

40 NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON DEGREE CLASSIFICATION

40.1 **Received** – an update on UCL's response to the national consultation by UKSCQA at EDCOM 3-03 (18-19) presented by the Head of Academic Policy and Quality Assurance.

40.2 The UKSCQA had initiated a consultation on perceived grade inflation across the sector. Academic Services had attended consultation events and ARQASC had had an initial discussion of the issues raised. A response had been submitted on behalf of UCL, approved by EdCom Chair's Action due to the timing of the deadline. EdCom was now being asked to give some initial consideration to the key consultation proposals and what action, if any, UCL might want to take.

40.3 The UKSCQA report indicated that there was a small amount of 'unexplained' grade inflation at UCL which would require investigation. EdCom noted that UCL was in a good position to respond, having just completed a three-year review of it's regulations. This had included extensive modelling and the changes were expected to lead to a reduction in the number of Firsts and Upper Seconds awarded.

40.4 EdCom discussed the following points:

a) It was felt that UCL should wait until the new regulations had worked through to a graduating cohort before any major changes were considered. However work could be undertaken in the intervening period to interrogate the data and consider further development of the regulations.

b) It was noted that the UCL data masked the diversity of classification trends at programme and department level. There were continued debates about the differences in marking practices across disciplines which were very complex, but which needed further investigation and some active steps towards resolution.

c) The OfS was currently only concerned about Honours Degree classifications, and not PGT programmes. The recently-agreed changes to UCL's PGT classification criteria were designed to better align UCL with the rest of the sector, but there were some concerns that this would lead to an increase in the number of Distinctions awarded, and this needed to be carefully monitored.

d) Committee members expressed some interest in exploring Borderline Criteria further. It was felt that exit velocity was already factored into the year weightings and further consideration at the borderlines might contribute to grade inflation.

e) The committee felt that there could be better sectoral benchmarks on appropriate ranges of marks/ standard deviations, to enable more cross-institutional comparisons. It would also be beneficial to benchmark internationally, as UCL's graduates were increasingly competing with students from a wide range of countries.

41 ALTERNATIVE AND OVERSEAS EXAMINATION VENUES

41.1 **Received** – the proposals at EDCOM 3-04 (18-19) presented by the Examinations Manager.

41.2 In 2017-18 there was a significant increase in the number of applications from students to sit their examinations overseas. This had unfortunately led to considerable concerns about the quality and integrity of UCL's examination process. Problems had included different dates and start times to the main UCL exams, late receipt of student scripts preventing progression, and lost scripts. The centres offered exams for a large number of universities so it was not possible for them to adhere to each institution's examination regulations. It was not possible to provide Special Examination Arrangements, and the Examination Team's time was taken away from supporting the majority of students in order to support a few.

41.3 In order to address these concerns, the Examinations Team proposed that overseas exams should be restricted to students on Distance Learning programmes (who were not expected to be in the UK) and to students who could not secure a visa (noting that the majority of student visas included an additional three months to cover reassessments). It was also suggested that, where overseas exams were unavoidable, the UCL fee was increased to more accurately reflect the administration costs of running the exams.

41.4 Faculty members of EdCom welcomed the proposals, noting the extensive problems that had affected student progression. The Students' Union expressed concerns about removing the option for students, and wanted to explore other ways in which UCL might address the concerns raised, such as sending UCL staff to oversee venues. The Examinations Team noted that the 2017-18 session had required complex liaison with around 70 different overseas institutions, and so it was very difficult to find ways to assure the integrity of the examinations process on such a scale.

41.5 **Agreed** – EdCom agreed that students should be expected to take their exams at UCL and approved the proposals to allow overseas exams only for Distance Learning students and students who could not obtain a visa. The UCL fee would be increased to £100 per exam to reflect the costs of offering the service. The changes would come into effect for the 2018-19 examinations period, and formalised in the Academic Manual from 2019-20 onwards.

42 UPDATE FROM THE LECTURECAST WORKING GROUP

42.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 3-05 (18-19) from the Chair of the Lecturecast Working Group.

42.2 A working group had been established to explore UCL's Lecturecast opt-out policy, investigate practices at other institutions and draw up detailed proposals. The group included a good mix of students and staff, although there were still some gaps in representation and EdCom was invited to submit any suggestions for members. The group planned to submit a draft policy to EdCom at the April meeting, and to then report to Academic Board in May.

43 OVERARCHING INTERCOLLEGIATE MODULE SHARING AGREEMENT

43.1 **Received** – the proposals at EDCOM 3-06 (18-19) presented by the Senior Policy Advisor: Academic Partnerships.

43.2 The paper presented an overarching intercollegiate module sharing agreement that had been developed with other University of London Colleges to formalise arrangements for optional and elective module sharing between the Colleges, and remove the need for bilateral arrangements and student terms and conditions. A student-facing policy based on the relevant provisions in the agreement was also presented. Each of the UoL Colleges was seeking approval from their academic committees.

43.3 **Approved in Principle** – the proposed agreement was approved in principle. EdCom noted that the proposal was only approved for UoL Colleges due to their historic relationship with UCL, and would not be considered for other institutions.

44 AUTHORISED DELEGATION LIMITS AND ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

44.1 **Received** – the proposals at EDCOM 3-07 (18-19) presented by the Senior Policy Advisor: Academic Partnerships.

44.2 The Academic Partnerships Framework required the Vice-Provost Education and Student Affairs and Vice-Provost International to authorise academic partnership agreements. Proposals were being submitted to align the Academic Partnerships Framework with the Delegated Authorisation Limits agreed by Council in May 2015.

44.3 **Approved** – EdCom approved the proposals to require contracts worth up to £250,000 to be approved by the VP ESA and the VP International, and contracts between £250,000 and £2,000,000 to be approved by the Director of Finance and Business Affairs and either the VP International for overseas agreements, or the VP ESA for UK agreements.

45 MODULE EVALUATIONS

45.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 3-08 (18-19) presented by the Director of Education Planning.

45.2 Harmonising module evaluation surveys is a 2021 commitment in the UCL Education Strategy. The report presented the outline requirements of a new common electronic system for use across UCL to replace the wide variety of mechanisms currently being used across departments. A common electronic system would significantly increase the amount of information available to departments; allow comparisons year on year and across modules; enable OVPESA to better support departments in their efforts to respond to student concerns and help UCL to collect and review information about teaching quality and student satisfaction in preparation for the subject-level TEF. The recent improvements to Portico meant that UCL was now in a position to take action.

45.3 A Project Board had been established with four of the Vice Deans. An Advisory Board was currently being put together to provide broader input - EdCom was invited to nominate members. The project team were currently looking at an electronic system which would send out surveys, send reminders to students to increase response rates, and collate the feedback into useful metrics for reporting at programme, department and faculty level. Systems providing both electronic and paper versions were available, but were considerably more costly to implement. The board would be looking at the different options in detail.

45.4 EdCom welcomed the proposals and made the following points:

a) EdCom welcomed the proposals for a few core questions supplemented by the flexibility for departments to create their own question sets.
b) The Students' Union welcomed the initiative as it would also provide additional data to support their work.
c) EdCom noted that staff sometimes worried that students might make personal comments and asked for appropriate checks and balances to be put in place to ensure that data were shared in an appropriate way. It might also be beneficial to work with students to discuss their responsibilities in providing constructive feedback.
d) While the benefits of an electronic system were evident, there was some concern that this would reduce student participation – it was often more effective to ask students to complete a paper form at the end of a class. If an electronic-only system were chosen, steps would need to be taken to boost participation.
e) It would be useful to be able to extract demographic analyses to feed into initiatives such as the BME Attainment project.

45.5 **Approved** – the system requirements as outlined in section 4 of the paper.

46 UK QUALITY CODE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

46.1 **Received** - the paper at EDCOM 3-09 (18-19) presented by the Director of Academic Services.

46.2 As part of the development of the new regulatory framework overseen by the OfS, QAA had published a new set of high level principles, known as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Academic Services had interrogated the new principles against UCL's former quality assessments and found that the overarching principles had remained broadly the same. This meant that the mapping of UCL practices to the previous Code still held. It was proposed that EdCom should continue to map UCL's alignment with the Expectations, and Core and Common Practices, and to ensure that UCL remained aligned with sector-wide best practice in respect of the Advice and Guidance.

46.3 **Agreed** - EdCom agreed that the ongoing monitoring of UCL's alignment should become an annual standing item and that, where appropriate, papers to EdCom proposing changes to regulations should be on an amended coversheet containing an assurance that the proposed change had been checked against, and was in alignment with, the Code.

47 INTERRUPTIONS OF STUDY TASK GROUP PROGRESS REPORT

47.1 **Received** – the update at EDCOM 3-10 (18-19) presented by the Faculty Tutor for Engineering, the Chair of the task group.

47.2 At its meeting on 2 October 2018, EdCom agreed to establish an Interruption of Study Task Group to draw together a number of issues which have arisen with regards to the Interruption of Study and Return to Study process. The group had met on a number of occasions and drawn up a set of guiding principles and a series of initial recommendations. Work was now underway to incorporate these into the regulations, which would be discussed at ARQASC before being submitted to EdCom for final approval.

47.3 Some of the key proposals included giving students an automatic right to one interruption of up to 12 months without the need for evidence; abolishing backdating and using the EC procedure to address issues which pre-dated the interruption; establishing standardised re-entry points to help departments better support students; clarifying student entitlements and access to facilities during interruption; and permitting Flexible Modular students to interrupt in their final year on the grounds of ECs, subject to the provision of suitable evidence and approval by the Faculty Tutor. The Chair of the group had also had discussions with finance, accommodation and other services to identify issues for resolution and ensure that the proposals were workable.

48 STUDENT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT TASK GROUP UPDATE

48.1 **Received** – the update at EDCOM 3-11 (18-19) presented by the Policy Advisor (Regulations), the secretary of the task group.

48.2 At its meeting on 2 October 2018, EdCom agreed to establish a task group to review and update the Examination Irregularities & Plagiarism Procedures. The group had met on a number of occasions to discuss a wide range of issues. Work was underway to draw up a new set of Student Academic Misconduct procedures, including a clearly structured table of penalties to help address variable practice across UCL. The regulations would be discussed at ARQASC before being submitted to EdCom for final approval.

48.3 Key issues which the group was addressing included ensuring a much clearer procedure for cases of contract cheating; defining acceptable and unacceptable proof-reading practices; distinguishing poor academic practice from cases of cheating; Faculty Tutors acting as advisors to Departmental Panels to help increase consistency; Faculty Tutors or their nominees sitting on Central Panels to provide disciplinary expertise; and a more streamlined appeals process.

49 INTRODUCTORY PROGRAMME

49.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 3-12 (18-19) presented by the Academic Director of the Introductory Programme.

49.2 Feedback from students in the NSS and PTES had indicated a need for greater support when students started at UCL. The new Introductory Programme was being designed to help students familiarise themselves with UCL, create a sense of belonging, give students a sense of what university will be like, support students in making the intellectual step towards critical thinking,

and ensuring that students were aware of the pastoral support available to them. The programme would include an online module exploring UCL via themes and objects, leading to a face-to-face component where students would complete tasks in teams. Initial testing with around 120 prospective students had been very positive, with the vast majority saying that they would engage with some or all of the programme. At present the programme was intended for all students, but testing had indicated that some adaptations might be needed for PGT students. The project team was aiming to trial the programme with five or six volunteer departments for 2019-20, with a view to a full roll-out the following year.

PART III: OTHER MATTERS FOR APPROVAL OR INFORMATION

50 StRAFC: ACADEMIC MANUAL CHAPTER 1 AMENDMENTS (ON-LINE PROGRAMME STARTING TIMES AND DISCLOSURE OF CRIMINAL RECORDS)

50.1 **Noted** – StRAFC had approved amendments to Chapter 1: Student Recruitment and Admissions Framework, as described at EDCOM 3-13 (18-19).

51 APPROVAL OF NEW PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

51.1 **Approved** – the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 3-14 (18-19).

52 MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

52.1 **Approved** – the minutes of the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub Committee held 19 November 2018 at EDCOM 3-15 (18-19).

52.2 **Approved** – the minutes of the Programme and Module Approval Panel held 8 November 2018 and 11 December 2018 at EDCOM 3-16 (18-19) and EDCOM 3-17 (18-19).

52.3 **Approved** – the minutes of the Quality Review Sub Committee held 22 November 2018 at EDCOM 3-18 (18-19).

53 SUSPENSIONS OF REGULATIONS

53.1 **Approved** – the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 3-19 (18-19).

54 DATES OF MEETINGS FOR 2018-19:

- Thursday 25 April 2019 10.30am to 1pm - Haldane Room, Wilkins Building
- Tuesday 11 June 2019 10.30am to 1pm - Haldane Room, Wilkins Building
- RESERVE MEETING: Thursday 18 July 2019 10.30am to 1pm - Haldane Room, Wilkins Building

LIZZIE VINTON
Secretary to Education Committee
Academic Regulations Manager | Academic Services | Student and Registry Services
Email: l.vinton@ucl.ac.uk

6 March 2019