Confirmed

Education Committee

25 February 2020

Minutes

Present:

Professor Anthony Smith (Chair)

Dr Simon Banks; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Ms June Hedges; Dr Arne Hofmann; Mr Zak Liddell; Mr Derfel Owen; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Helen Matthews; Ms Emer O'Driscoll; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Professor Aeli Roberts; Ms Ashley Slanina-Davies; Professor Eva Sorensen; Dr Fiona Strawbridge and Professor Olga Thomas.

In attendance: Dr Jenny Griffiths (deputising for Dr Sam Smidt); Ms Katie Price (deputising for Ms Megan Gerrie); Professor Stephen Price for Item 43 and Mr Simon To for Item 45.

Observing the meeting: Ms Annabel Brown; Mr Ewart Wooldridge CBE (attending to observe EdCom in the capacity of Consulting Fellow and member of the Halpin Team (of the external review provider Halpin Partnership)).

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms Wendy Appleby; Ms Megan Gerrie; Professor Deborah Gill; Dr Sandra Leaton-Gray; Mr Ian Davis; Dr Jo Pearce; Professor Mike Porter; Professor Norbert Pachler, Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Sam Smidt and Dr Hazel Smith.

Part I: Preliminary Business

40.   Minutes of the last meeting

40.1. Approved – the minutes of the previous meeting at EDCOM 3-02 (19-20) held on 3 December 2019 (EdCom Minutes 21-39, 2019-20), subject to correction of minor errors.

41.   Matters arising from the minutes

41A.   Report on Exam Paper Queries (Minute 28, 2019-20)

41A.1 Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-02 (19-20).

41A.2 The amended report on Exam Paper Queries and Errors (EDCOM 2-04, 2019-20) had been circulated. This included the raw data and more detailed information, such as the actual number of errors in a department shown against the number of exam papers. Members were asked to contact the Examinations Manager if they had any further questions.

41B.   Response to Industrial Action (Minute 25, 2019-20)

41B.1 The Director of Academic Services reported on a range of mechanisms which were being put in place to support students through the period of industrial action. A task group was meeting weekly, and work had been undertaken to update the Student FAQs and the annexes in the Material Irregularity Procedure.

41B.2 The task group had agreed an extension to exam paper printing deadlines so that material that had not been covered could be removed. Concerns were raised about missed material on professionally-accredited programmes, which could not necessarily be removed from exam papers. The task group had also had extensive discussions about students who felt unable to cross the picket line. Whilst it was agreed that this could be unpleasant for students, it would not be possible to put mitigation in place for a student who missed an assessment for this reason.

41B.4 The Students' Union asked for more information on the impact on coursework, as most of the information thus far had focussed on examinations.

42.   Degree Apprenticeships Steering Group Terms of Reference

42.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-03 (2019-20).

42.2   A Degree Apprenticeships Steering Group was being set up to provide governance and leadership for the implementation of degree apprenticeship programmes at UCL, and to provide feedback on preliminary feasibility assessments prior to submission to PMAP. The group would also develop and maintain regulations and quality assurance policies for consideration and approval by appropriate UCL committees, monitor operational activities and have oversight of internal and external audits.

42.3   The Students' Union requested that a Students' Union representative be included in addition to the student member, in order to maintain continuity from year to year.

42.4   Approved – the Degree Apprenticeships Steering Group Terms of Reference.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

43.   Report from the Exam Board Statistics Working Group

43.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-04 (19-20) presented by Professor Stephen Price, the Chair of the Working Group.

43.2. There had been considerable frustration about the operation of exam boards in the summer of 2019, and so a working group of Exam Board Chairs from across different faculties had been convened. The group was tasked with consulting the wider academic community, prioritising the requirements for initial data checking, moderation and longer-term trend analysis, advising on report design, and developing guidance for Boards. The group met three times in person and considered over 30 email submissions. These informed a number of recommendations aimed at simplifying the operation of exam boards.

43.3. The Director of Academic Services welcomed the recommendations and the input from so many engaged chairs. It was suggested that a similar review was conducted each autumn to discuss and share good practice, and to allow Exam Board Chairs to be involved in future developments and testing.

43.4. EdCom welcomed the recommendations and the bottom-up approach. It was suggested that there could be more guidance on how to follow up trends

identified in the reports, especially where there were issues which needed urgent attention. Members also discussed the role of the Faculty Boards of Examiners, and suggested that it might be an opportune moment to review their terms of reference.

43.5. Approved – the recommendations of the Exam Board Statistics Working Group.

44. Exam Board Planning 2019-20

44.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-05 (19-20) introduced by the Director of Academic Services.

44.2. The report updated Education Committee on the work being undertaken by the Academic Model Project and Student Records to address issues with the online processing of progression, award and classification outcomes and the production of reports for Exam Boards.

44.3. The Director of Academic Services noted that there were a very high number of rules and local variations, and a very high number of student details, which had to be programmed into the Academic Model. Due to this scale, there had been errors in applying the rules to all students. Some non-modular programmes, such as the MBBS, had also felt that there was inadequate systems support for their variations.

44.4. Work was underway to provide better mechanisms for checking data well in advance of the exam boards, and to provide more guidance for departments. A further project strand was aiming to ensure that local variations were articulated as clearly as possible so that calculations were accurate. This had been a particular issue with years abroad and placements, where there was a very high degree of variation across different departments and faculties.

44.5. Another strand was looking at rebuilding the PGT workflow. There had also been an erroneous assumption that the majority of PGT programmes followed the standard year-long, September–start model, when in fact there was a significant minority of programmes which taught into term 3 and the summer holiday, and a high volume of flexible/ modular students.

44.6. The AMP was undertaking extensive testing, and aiming for departmental testing in April. There were also plans to provide a flat file download for boards to run their own statistical analyses. A working group of Exam Board

Chairs and Examination Liaison Officers was overseeing the package of work, and a Student Records Manager had been assigned to each Faculty to ensure that variations were working effectively.

44.7. EdCom noted that details of each project strand were being published in the Academic Services newsletter, but felt that it would be beneficial to also use other communications channels to reach different members of staff.

45. Student Academic Representation Annual Report 2018-19

45.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-06 (19-20) presented by the Students' Union (SU) Education Officer and the Leadership, Development and Change Manager.

45.2. In 2018-19 1596 Academic Representatives were appointed, covering 97% of SSCCs. 87% of SSCCs appointed a Lead Department Rep and 94% of Faculty Rep Roles were filled. 495 Academic Reps completed a handover document for their successor (+72%), 483 received recognition certificates, and 1216 Course and Research Reps were trained, an increase on previous years. The Students' Union extended their thanks to faculties and departments for their continued support in improving academic representation at UCL.

45.3. This year had been challenging as the number of staff supporting the programme had been reduced significantly. The SU had also felt that the Faculty reps system was working well, but it had been harder to get buy-in at departmental level. As a result, the SU were investigating a move to a partnership model with departments, to help develop academic representation activities collaboratively.

45.4. The EdCom student representative spoke about their own experiences as a Faculty Representative. They felt that the role was very helpful but there could be better communications between Faculty Reps and staff, more help in bringing different reps together, and help with handing over from year to year. Faculty Tutors agreed that communications had been challenging and noted that, in some cases, the Lead Departmental Rep role had made it more difficult for Faculty Reps to speak to students directly. The timing of meetings was also an issue, as reps were often not in place until term 2, and there were only a limited number of faculty meetings for them to attend. Ways to engage

at a more informal level would be helpful. Student Reps had also reported that the SSCC agenda felt a little too prescriptive, rather than co-created. Academic Services was looking at the terms of reference to try to improve this.

45.5. EdCom endorsed the SU's business partnering model and their funding application to invest in academic representation activities with departments.

46. Oral update from the Student Support Review Group

46.1. The Head of Education and Student Experience, Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MAPS) provided a verbal update on the work of the Student Support Review Group.

46.2. A group had been set up to review UCL's procedures relating to Fitness to Study, Extenuating Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustments, and to continue the work already begun on interruptions. The group had been investigating examples of good practice from across the sector, and discussing the development of a single, student-centred process for accessing all types of 'academic adjustments' (working title). Discussion papers were also being put together for wider consultation across UCL on topics such as self-certification, and the SU had also been speaking to students about their experiences of current support mechanisms.

46.3. The group was aiming to put forward recommendations at end of 2019-20 for further development the following year and implementation in 2021-22. This timeline would help to ensure that systems support was included in any new developments. However, a number of 'quick wins' had already been identified which could potentially be implemented in 2020-21.

46.4. EdCom endorsed the idea of single process which steered students towards the help available to them and agreed that such a system should be developed in partnership with students. It was noted that system developments could take longer and so the group should also be looking at how to provide improvements which were not reliant on new systems.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

47. UCL Qatar Update

47.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-07 (19-20)

47.2. UCL Qatar provided an update on their teach-out plan which aimed to ensure that students were properly supported through to completion.

47.3. EdCom noted that, while there were Coronavirus concerns in the Middle East, there were currently no reported cases in Qatar. Nevertheless, the Director of UCL Qatar had been working on contingency plans should travel restrictions etc. be put in place.

48.   Contextual Offers Regulations

48.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 3-08 (19-20).

48.2. StRAFC had agreed to remove the academic assessment requirement from Contextual Offers. An in-session amendment to the regulations in Chapter 1 of the UCL Academic Manual had been approved so that current applicants could make an informed decision.

49.   Approval of New Programmes

49.1. Approved – the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 3-09 (19-20).

50.   Suspensions of Regulations

50.1. Approved – the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 3-10 (19-20).

51.   Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

51.1. Approved – the minutes of the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub Committee held 14 November 2019 at EDCOM 3-11 (19-20).

51.2. Approved – the minutes of the Programme and Module Approval Panel held on 19 September 2019 and 7 November 2019 at EDCOM 3-12 (19-20) and EDCOM 3-13 (19-20).

51.3. Approved – the minutes of the Quality Review Sub Committee held 20 November 2019 at EDCOM 3-14 (19-20).

52.   Any Other Business – Covid-19

52.1. The situation regarding Coronavirus was changing quite rapidly. The Provost had set up a contingency planning group which was meeting weekly to consider the potential impact on this year's students and next year's applicants. The disease was currently impacting China quite significantly which had led to the cancellation of qualifying exams and the closure of English language testing centres. If there was an outbreak in London, Public Health England could instruct universities to shut down and UCL would need to deliver its teaching online and consider whether the summer examination period could go ahead. Moving to online delivery would involve an enormous amount of work, and planning would need to start as soon as possible. The Director of Digital Education had been asked to provide a paper setting out the options available.

53.   Dates of Next Meeting

53.1. The dates of the EdCom meetings for the rest of the 2019-20 session are:

- Thursday 30 April 2020 10.30am (Room B.05 Darwin Building)
- Monday 8 June 2020 10.30am (Room B.05 Darwin Building)
- RESERVED MEETING Thursday 16 July 2020 10.30am (Room B.05 Darwin Building)

Lizzie Vinton

Secretary to EdCom

Academic Regulations Manager

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24 April 2020