



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

25 April 2019

MINUTES

Present:

Professor Anthony Smith (Chair);

Dr Tracey Allen; Dr Simon Banks; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Dr Arne Hofmann; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Professor Tim McHugh; Mr Derfel Owen; Professor Norbert Pachler; Dr Mike Porter; Dr Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Sam Smidt; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Eva Sorensen; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Ms Olga Thomas; Professor David Waters.

In attendance: Ms Lizzie Vinton (Secretary); Mr Khaleel Mirza from the Students' Union; Dr Sam Evans and Ms Piera Gerrard for item 57; Ms Anniina Wikman for item 58; Mr Nick McGhee for item 62.

Apologies were received from: Ms Rothna Akhtar; Ms Wendy Appleby; Mr Ian Davis; Professor Deborah Gill; Ms June Hedges; Dr Sandra Leaton Gray; Dr Helen Matthews and Mr Saddiquir Rahman.

Key to abbreviations

AB	Academic Board
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
APRG	Academic Partnerships Review Group
ARQASC	Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub Committee
CMA	Competitions and Markets Authority
EC	Extenuating Circumstances
EdCom	Education Committee
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
LSA	Late Summer Assessment
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
OIA	Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
OVPEA	Office of the Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs)
PGT	Taught Postgraduate
PMAP	Programme and Module Approval Panel
VP (E&SA)	Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs)

PART I: PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

55 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

55.1 **Agreed** – the Minutes of the meeting held 25 February 2019 (EdCom Minutes 36-54, 18-19).

56 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

56A Sub Board Template Agenda and Checklist (*EdCom Minute 39.7, 18-19*)

56A.1 **Approved** – The amendments to the Sub Board Template Agenda and Checklist at EDCOM 4-01 (18-19), to reflect the amendments to the standard templates approved at the last meeting.

PART II: MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

57 UCL QATAR CLOSURE

- 57.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 4-02 (18-19) presented by Dr Sam Evans, Director UCL Qatar and Ms Piera Gerrard, Programme Director UCL Qatar.
- 57.2 UCL Qatar would close at the end of 2020 when the contract with the Qatar Foundation ended. The paper explained the planning and implementation already underway to deliver the closure plans. EdCom was responsible for ensuring that there was a robust teach-out plan and that students were fully supported throughout the process.
- 57.3 The contractual closure date was 31 October 2020, when UCL was required to leave the country. UCL was currently negotiating a two-month extension to 31 December 2020 to ensure that students were fully protected in the event of any reassessments, deferrals etc. which might extend their period of registration.
- 57.4 Three essential changes had been identified in order to deliver a robust teach-out plan. These had been discussed with the VP (E&SA), the Director of Academic Services and the Qatar Country Board. Students and offer-holders had been consulted and had given their consent to the changes. External Examiners had also been informed of the proposals. The changes were approved by EdCom Chair's Action on 11 March 2019 due to their time-sensitive nature:
- Change 1:** UCL Qatar can modify the teaching mode to permit delivery of the academic programme using a 'condensed delivery' for up to seven optional modules in Term 2 of the final 2019/20 academic year, subject to the outcome of a formal consultation with continuing part-time students and offer holders
 - Change 2:** a derogation to the UCL Academic Manual Chapter 4 Section 11.4.3 that reduces the time allowed for students to re-submit a failed dissertation from three months to two months
 - Change 3:** a modification to the contract with students, as defined by UCL's Student Relationship Terms, to be incorporated in a revised offer letter to new applicants.
- 57.5 A range of other activities was also underway to support the teach-out including ensuring the timely ratification of awards, prompt resolution of any academic misconduct cases, the handover of all student records to the central UCL team, and planning for any PhD students who might be at risk of not completing by the closure date.
- 57.6 EdCom discussed the potential issues which might arise from students not completing their programmes with the normal registration period. It was noted that 40 offers had been made for 2019-20, and a full cohort of 60 was expected. Historical figures indicated that approximately 6% of the cohort might not be able to complete within the normal timescales. All offers had been made on the basis that students would not be able to interrupt, and the above plans were designed to support students who might fail a module or have extenuating circumstances. Students with insufficient credits would have the opportunity to receive interim qualifications as appropriate, and APL could also be considered to transfer students to a cognate UCL degree in London. It was noted that similar plans had been in place for the teach-out of UCL Australia, and these measures had covered the vast majority of students. It was recognised that there might be one or two students in difficult circumstances who might need more bespoke solutions, and UCL Qatar were ensuring that any such students were identified early and supported effectively.
- 57.7 **Agreed** - EdCom requested that consideration be given to whether the reduced dissertation resubmission window of two months might have an impact on students' ability to achieve the same learning outcomes. The Director of UCL Qatar agreed to take this forward.
- Action: Director of UCL Qatar**
- 57.8 EdCom welcomed the thorough and detailed plans, and commended UCL Qatar for its dedication in ensuring an excellent student experience in the teach-out.

58 CHAPTER 8 ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS FRAMEWORK 2019-20

- 58.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 4-03 (18-19) presented the Senior Policy Advisor (Academic Partnerships).
- 58.2 The paper detailed a number of amendments including updated terminology, improvements to forms, the incorporation of policies already approved by EdCom at its February 2019, and amended regulations and forms for terminating partnerships and agreeing exit strategies.
- 58.3 EdCom was also reminded of the decision taken at its July 2018 meeting to suspend recruitment for any programmes which did not have an up-to-date Memorandum of Agreement in place by 1 September of each year. EdCom gave departments a year's grace to reconcile outstanding contracts before the policy came into force from 1 September 2019. While this had resulted in the successful completion of a number of key MoAs, there were still a small number outstanding. Academic Services would be writing to the relevant departments shortly to advise of the steps which would be taken to suspend recruitment. The affected faculties were also invited to contact the VP (E&SA) if they felt that a more senior level of support might help to engage the partner.

59 PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS TO THE PROGRAMME APPROVAL AND AMENDMENT PROCESS FOR 2019-20

- 59.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 4-04 (18-19) presented by the Chair of PMAP.
- 59.2 In response to the recommendations of an internal audit of the programme approval process, PMAP was proposing a number of enhancements including greater support for programme initiators at an earlier stage, ensuring that programme changes aligned with CMA requirements, and ensuring that there was adequate space to accommodate new student numbers.
- 59.3 EdCom welcomed the proposals for greater support, including giving detailed feedback from PMAP at the outline approval, rather than final approval, stage and reducing the number of forms. There would also be more support from the UCL Arena team between the outline and final stages in the form of development days, which would also include Digital Education and Library Services.
- 59.4 CMA requirements meant that the deadline for programme amendments would need to be brought forward to 30 November for the 2020-21 academic session and then to the end of term 3 for all subsequent years. EdCom expressed some concerns that this might stifle academic innovation in programme design, and would also make it much more difficult to be responsive to student feedback. This was particularly difficult for PGT programmes with Boards of Examiners in October/ November. However it was noted that the CMA had strict requirements about any substantive changes to a programme after offers had been made, and this meant that changes had to be agreed much earlier than at present. Modules would also need to be confirmed earlier if the new Module Catalogue and the indicative module selection process were to work effectively. The change applied to all levels of module and programme change, although it was agreed that there should still be a mechanism to approve exceptional late changes, e.g. if a member of staff with a niche specialism left UCL.
- 59.5 EdCom welcomed the proposals for a formal sign-off by the Estates and Planning teams to ensure that there was space for the proposed student numbers. It was agreed that, if Estates or Planning had concerns about a proposal, it should be forwarded to the VP (E&SA) for further consideration.
- 59.6 EdCom also discussed other ways to improve the process, which was often viewed as rather bureaucratic, despite the range of improvements that had been made in recent years. EdCom requested that the forms be put online so that technical information could be pre-filled, allowing programme teams to focus more on pedagogical development, and noted that PMAP was currently scoping such a system.

60 EXAMINATION PERIODS 2019-20

- 60.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 4-05 (18-19) from the Examinations Manager.
- 60.2 There had been a significant increase in the number of UG examination candidatures making it increasingly difficult to schedule all exams within the current five-week UG period. The

Examinations Operations Group had considered and consulted on two models (A and B), taking into account the difficulties of changing any part of a very complex process. The majority of consultation respondents had felt that replacing the separate UG and PGT examination periods with a single six-week exam period was preferable to delaying the Late Summer Assessment period which could have a significant impact on students' ability to progress to subsequent years and make module selections. However the change would mean that departments would have less time to mark if their exams fell in the additional week. The consultation responses had informed a third Option C which was now being presented to EdCom for consideration.

- 60.3 EdCom noted that the change could affect the timing of field trips and other post-board activities such as supplementary modules or the Global Citizenship programme. It could also affect departmentally-run exams and assessments. It was noted that the LSA period had already been reduced from three weeks to two. Additionally, from 2019-20 there would be an earlier module selection process where students could register an interest pending their exam results. This would help to address students' worries about missing out on modules due to LSAs. The Exam Operations Group had also considered releasing results later, but most students wanted their degree outcomes as early as possible, and some graduation ceremonies took place in July. Students also needed adequate warning if they were required to resit in the LSA. The Exam Operations Group had considered all of these very carefully and concluded that Model C was the most workable solution. However they were cognisant of the difficulties it presented, and were keen to agree the timetable now to give departments plenty of time to consider any adjustments that might be needed.
- 60.4 It was noted that the largest exams were already prioritised for the first two weeks of the exam period to allow maximum marking time, and departments were given the opportunity to opt out of that formula. The Students' Union raised concerns that this meant that some students' exams were tightly clustered which had an impact on wellbeing. The Chair highlighted the enormous amount of progress that had been made in improving the examinations period, with the examination timetable being published much earlier, a single fit-for-purpose venue and in-year resits and deferrals. The Arena team was also working with departments to explore other assessment methods besides written examinations. The Exams Team did everything they could to avoid clustering, including avoiding two exams on one day for any student, but the sheer size and complexity of the timetabling task meant that some clustering was unavoidable.
- 60.5 **Approved** – Model C was approved for 2019-20. OVPESA would work with Academic Services to communicate the changes.

Action: Examinations Manager

61 OVERSEAS EXAMS [EdCom Minute 41, 18-19]

- 61.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 4-06 (18-19) from the Examinations Manager.
- 61.2 At its February 2019 meeting, 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 changes would come into effect for the 2018-19 examinations period, and formalised in the Academic Manual from 2019-20 onwards. It was also agreed that the UCL fee would be increased to £100 per exam to reflect the costs of offering the service. The Students' Union had requested an itemised breakdown of this figure. This included an estimated cost of £128.38 per exam paper.

62 UCL STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2019-20

- 62.1 **Received** – the paper at EDCOM 4-07 (18-19) presented by the Deputy Director of Academic Services (Casework and Governance).
- 62.2 The proposals aimed to address the OIA's requirement for all institutions to have their own internal appeals mechanism. At present UCL students wishing to appeal the outcome of a complaint had recourse to an externally-chaired panel and this sometimes resulted in mitigation that was uninformed by (or even contrary to) to UCL regulations or principles. The proposals had been discussed in a number of fora, and consultation was also underway with

the Students' Union. The proposals would be submitted to AB for consultation on 15 May and to Council for formal approval on 4 June.

- 62.3 EdCom queried whether the original panel should review its own decision, rather than a new panel considering the appeal, especially if it was made on the grounds of new evidence coming to light. It was noted that new panels are standard practice across the sector as they reassure the student that they will have a fair hearing, and help to minimise the expectation that any new information will automatically result in a different outcome.
- 62.4 EdCom discussed the two-month application time limit. Some felt that this was restrictive for students who might be having mental health difficulties. However this was twice the current time limit, and quite generous in comparison to sector practice. It was however felt that outcome letters could be sent to students in fewer than 14 days. It was also suggested that the language used in the document be reviewed to ensure that it supported students' wellbeing.
- 62.5 The committee discussed the current appeals process for Extenuating Circumstances claims. One faculty in particular was receiving a high number of appeals. At present appeals were considered by the Chair of the Faculty EC Panel, but this could mean the chair being asked to review their own decision. Current practice was to ask a different Faculty Tutor to consider the appeal, and it would be helpful to formalise this in the regulations. It was agreed that ARQASC would discuss this further.

Action: Academic Regulations Manager

PART III: OTHER MATTERS FOR APPROVAL OR INFORMATION

63 PG STUDENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS 2019-20

- 63.1 **Noted** - Amendments to Postgraduate Terms and Conditions recommended by the CMA Working Group at EDCOM 4-08 (18-19). The terms and conditions between UCL and its graduate students had been updated by Legal Services to ensure they were compliant with legislation and regulation such as the CMA guidance for universities and GDPR.

64 APPROVAL OF CHANGES TO THE ACADEMIC MANUAL RECOMMENDED BY ARQASC

- 64.1 **Approved** - Amendments to the Summer School Regulations 2018-19 recommended by ARQASC at EDCOM 4-09 (18-19).
- 64.2 **Approved** - Amendments to Chapter 3: Taught Registration Framework to accommodate Online Programmes for 2019-20 recommended by ARQASC at EDCOM 4-10 (18-19).

65 APPROVAL OF NEW PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

- 65.1 **Approved** – the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 4-11 (18-19).

66 APPROVAL OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

- 66.1 **Approved** – the academic partnerships recommended by APRG at EDCOM 4-12 (18-19).

67 MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

- A **Approved** – the Minutes of the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub Committee held 28 January 2019 at EDCOM 4-13 (18-19).
- B **Approved** – the Minutes of the Programme and Module Approval Panel held 7 February 2019 at EDCOM 4-14 (18-19).
- C **Approved** – the Minutes of the Quality Review Sub Committee held 31 January 2019 at EDCOM 4-15 (18-19).

68 APPROVAL OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

68.1 **Approved** – the alternative assessment methods for the Late Summer Assessment period at EDCOM 4-16 (18-19).

69 SUSPENSIONS OF REGULATIONS

69.1 **Approved** – the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 4-17 (18-19).

70 DATES OF MEETINGS FOR 2018-19:

- 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

14 May 2019