Education Committee
Room 822, Institute of Education

25 April 2023

Confirmed Minutes

Present:

Professor Kathy Armour (Chair)

Dr Ali Abolfathi; Professor Simon Banks; Ms Karen Barnard; Dr Nicole Brown; Dr Parama Chaudhury; Ms Sarah Cowls; Professor Sally Day; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Professor Arne Hofmann; Ms Harriet Israel; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Margaret Mayston; Ms Mary McHarg; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Mary Richardson; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Olga Thomas; Ms Lizzie Vinton; Dr Nalini Vittal; Professor Nicola Walshe and Ms Julia Wojciechowska

In attendance: Ms Evi Katsapi (for Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce), Ms Lindsay Ure (for Ms June Hedges), Ms Sally Mackenzie (Minute 79), Mr Carl Salton-Brooks (Minutes 82) and Mr Rob Traynor (Interim Secretary).

Apologies: Mr Hamza Ahmed; Mr Ian Davis; Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce, Ms June Hedges; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva; Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho; Professor Bill Sillar; Professor Kathryn Woods and Professor Stan Zochowski.

Part I: Preliminary Business

76. Welcome and Announcements
76.1. The Chair announced that there would be an Education for Sustainable Development Network Launch Event on Thursday 4th May for UCL staff and students. A link to the event was circulated to the members on the EdCom Teams site.

77. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
77.1. **Approved** – the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 February 2023 [EdCom Minutes 58-75, 2022-23] at EDCOM 6-01 (22-23), subject to correction of a minor error.

78. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting
78.1. None that were not already in progress or covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

79. UCL Education Strategy Project One Update
79.1. Received - a presentation by Ms Sally Mackenzie, Associate Director, Education & Student Experience, preceded by an overview of the Strategic Education Projects provided by Ms

Lizzie Vinton. The slides were collated into a single document "Introduction to UCL's Strategic Education Projects 2022-27", available on the EdCom Teams site and SharePoint.

79.2. Ms Vinton informed EdCom that the Strategic Education Projects were part of the wider UCL Strategic Plan 2022-27 and consisted of four core projects:
- UCL Education Framework for the Future
- Programme Architecture
- Institute of Higher Education, Development and Support (HEDS)
- Student Life Strategy

A number of interdependent projects were also linked to the core projects.

79.3. EdCom noted that Phase 1: Design for the Future was currently underway, to agree shared principles and values to underpin the projects. This will require EdCom approval and lead to Phase 2: Create Space (2023-34) which would consider ways to simplify UCL's portfolio, enabling more innovative and creative teaching and assessment practice. The final two years of the projects would focus on supporting staff to deliver change in their areas, with the aim to support students to realise their ambitions.

79.4. Ms Mackenzie provided an update on development of the Education Framework for the Future. This was intended to enable UCL to face new challenges from the changing higher education context, guide the approach to planning and programme development and to articulate shared principles and ambitions. The Framework was intended to build on the provision already in place and working well. Phase 2 will further explore the emerging ideas previously suggested by EdCom and the Peer Change Group (PCG), seeking collective feedback from faculties, professional services and the Students' Union (SU).

79.5. EdCom noted that a great deal of work had gone into identifying the four principles which informed the Framework. The PCG particularly valued Principle 3: that UCL education was values-led to meet the needs of individuals and societies. It was unclear to some members what this meant in practice and how it might inform actions and initiatives as faculties and individuals could interpret values differently. Hence, some flexibility in application would be necessary. Nonetheless, the PCG considered this principle to be important, perhaps wishing to acknowledge UCL's non-conformist heritage and pioneering educational approaches.

79.6. It was also suggested that greater clarity was required in terms of operation and how the Framework and its principles would inform projects and initiatives to make significant practical improvements. Strengthening UCL infrastructure would be essential and a number of the projects, such as curriculum data management, would help to reduce staff overload and pressure on students. However, communications with students on these changes would be crucial to ensure their understanding and support. This should be aligned with the vision outlined in the Education Strategy.

79.7. Faculty feedback on the discussion paper had suggested that additional resources were required in order to invest in these changes. This would be difficult in the context of the current funding arrangements for higher education, with less money being received from

research councils and industry and overseas student recruitment near its limit. Home student fee income was also unlikely to increase, despite improved demographics, due to the economic situation and increasing student scrutiny of the cost of education. Careful consideration would be required of the current resources and how they might be used more effectively, drawing on prior experience and successes both within UCL and from the sector.

79.8. EdCom's role in the development of Education Framework for the Future was to encourage discussions on these emerging ideas across faculties, professional services and with the SU. A conversation paper had been circulated to faculties to elicit collective responses (deadline for comment 31 May) and consultation events with the SU and professional services were also scheduled in May. It was intended that the draft Framework would be submitted to EdCom in June and July for review. It would then be formally submitted to Academic Committee for approval.

80. Introduction to Programme Architecture

80.1. Received - a presentation and discussion paper at EDCOM 6-02 (22-23) introduced by Ms Lizzie Vinton, Project manager: Programme Architecture. The slides are included in the "Introduction to UCL's Strategic Education Projects 2022-27" document available on the EdCom Teams site and SharePoint.

80.2. EdCom noted that the Programme Architecture framework would replace the current Qualifications and Credit Framework to provide more coherent, future-facing programmes that were clearer for students, staff, and employers to understand and navigate. The project sought to reduce the complexity of current structures and processes, reduce the staff administrative burden, and simplify the programme development process. This will help ensure that UCL is prepared to respond agilely to future challenges on funding, employment requirements and changing student demand.

80.3. It is intended that the new Programme Architecture framework is in place to coincide with UCL's bicentennial celebrations in 2026-27. Development was being initiated now, with the design of the Framework to be conducted in partnership with the UCL community during the next session. Departments would then be supported to adapt their programmes to the Framework in 2024-25, with delivery preparations held the following year. The first students would be enrolled on the refreshed programmes in 2026-27.

80.4. Three workstreams were planned, the first to define the UCL "programme" in order to identify better ways to organise processes and infrastructure. This involved analysis of the existing UCL offer, outlined in the paper, which revealed over 1000 programmes currently on offer but with over 500 programmes either inactive or highly complex and/or with very low numbers. The workstream would explore how this might be simplified, perhaps with fewer entry points and more exit points, to increase clarity for applicants, but retain student choice in the degree they graduate with.

80.5. Workstream 2 will consider the introduction of a range of Curriculum Templates, adapting best practice at other leading universities, to agree common module structures for

programmes to align with in a way that is appropriate to their discipline. This will help to alleviate complexity in scheduling and module selection, with new programmes choosing the right template for their requirements. The first two workstreams were intended to free up staff time and resources, to be considered by Workstream 3, Creating Space which will help add value to learning opportunities for all students. This will link with the themes emerging from UCL Education Framework for the Future conversations.

80.6. EdCom was broadly positive about the Programme Architecture project and a number of points were raised in the discussion:
   i. Reducing entry points was viewed positively by SU members as it should help make the UCL offer clearer for applicants. Moving choice on degree routes to later in the student journey would enable more informed decisions when they had some experience of their programme and UCL. This worked well in the Faculty of Life Sciences already, although it was important to have module choice flexibility. However, it would be important to work closely with mature and part-time learners to improve information, who often found the UCL programme offer opaque.
   ii. Curriculum templates should improve programme design, as well as programme approval and operation. They should support departments to better fit programme proposals with the overall UCL offer. A broad range of templates would be needed to ensure continuity for UCL's diverse offering, such as Brain Sciences' health education programmes and the IOE's education graduate qualifications. However, the intention was not to stop good existing programmes, but rather to make them easier to set up and be compatible with existing provision. It was suggested that the rationale for the templates was explained clearly and linked to other drivers for improvement, such as timetabling, module selection and assessment.
   iii. The suggested timeline raised some concerns on possible difficulties of moving existing programme on to the new framework in time, due to practicalities such as meeting tight prospectus publication deadlines. EdCom noted that this would be an evolving process, with not all programmes likely to launch for 2026. It was acceptable to take longer if they otherwise were moving in the right direction.
   iv. It was suggested that Workstream 3 Creating Space could provide opportunities to invest more time in educating staff about the curriculum and helping them to be better educators. Staff often had little time to invest in themselves and by making space through the Framework, UCL might invest in time for training and development. This would also improve the student experience, as staff brought new and refreshed skills to their teaching practice.

80.7. Members were encouraged to participate in further conversations on the Programme Architecture discussion paper which would be circulated to the UCL community. Following this, more detailed proposals will be drawn up for consideration in the Autumn. EdCom will continue to be involved in the development of the Framework and members encouraged to contact Ms Vinton with their comments and suggestions (l.vinton@ucl.ac.uk).

81. HEDS Faculty Partnerships Teams
81.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 6-03 (22-23) introduced by Ms Karen Barnard, Director of UCL Careers, and Acting Director of the Arena Centre. EdCom noted that a new institute for

Higher Education Development & Support (HEDS) will create HEDS Faculty Partnership Teams (HFTPs), as outlined in the UCL strategic Plan 2022-27. The teams will consist of UCL Arena and Careers representatives alongside Academic Communications Centre (ACC) colleagues to support faculties with the development and embedding of the new education framework, programme architecture and priorities arising from the Faculty Education Plans (FEPs).

81.2. The HFPTs, to be in place from next session, will co-ordinate with the relevant Faculty Learning Technology Leads to provide consistent support on the FEPs to Faculty Education Teams. This will include support, all in one place, to help faculties interpret the data for the FEPs and plan appropriately. The data will include National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Survey (PGS), continuation and completion rates, Graduate Outcomes survey and the data relating to awarding gaps. The teams would be supported by Programme Design Team and Work-related Learning leads, and it was envisaged that they would also connect more widely where possible to other providers of support, such as the Library.

81.3. EdCom welcomed the HFPTs and noted the intention to meet with faculty Vice-Deans (Education) soon to inform them of the initiative with a view to having the HFPTs in place for next session. It was suggested that Faculty Tutors were also approached, as the Vice-Deans (Education) role was part-time, and it was important to ensure wide faculty leadership awareness of the initiative. It was queried, notwithstanding the advantages of bringing services together, whether there was a danger that the new roles could diminish current working relationships between faculties and support roles. However, the HFPTs were designed to enhance this support and provide a more consistent and coordinated approach.

82. Student Life Strategy Year One Implementation Summary

82.1. Received – a presentation and paper at EDCOM 6-04 (22-23), introduced by Mr Carl Salter-Brooks, Director of Student Experience, Students' Union (SU). The slides are available on the EdCom Teams site and SharePoint.

82.2. EdCom noted the progress of the projects intended to meet the priorities of the Student Life Strategy, delivered in partnership between the SU and UCL, which aimed to double the level of student engagement in the next five years. The projects were evaluated using a number of themes, including equity, to minimise barriers to engagement (e.g., enabling students to participate in activities outside of their current skills, such as music and sport), reflecting on the skills developed (e.g., through volunteering activities) and measuring community and the student sense of identity.

82.3. EdCom warmly welcomed the report and was impressed by the implementation underway for the ambitious strategy. It was important to measure and communicate the impact of the projects which provided co- and extra-curricular provision to enhance the student experience. The new Student Life Committee (SLC) will be responsible, on behalf of EdCom, for assuring quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes in students' non-academic experiences and would cover the Student Life Strategy. The Chair congratulated Ms Mary McHarg, the SU Activities and Engagement Officer, who will co-Chair the SLC.

83. Examinations and Assessment Contingency Panel Update

83.1. Received – a late paper at EDCOM 6-08 (22-23) introduced by Professor Norbert Pachler, Chair of the Examinations and Assessment Contingency Panel (EACP). The paper outlined EACP's proposal for assessment mitigation arising from the continuing University and College Union (UCU) industrial action and specifically, the Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB). The proposals related to undergraduate (UG) assessments with postgraduate taught (PGT) to follow later. EACP would meet again soon to agree guidance.

83.2. EdCom was informed that the proposals needed to ensure that academic standards were met and ensure problems arising from the MAB dealt with in a timely manner. This needed to be fair and meet the student expectation to receive the outcomes of their degrees. It was proposed that classification should be given where possible, even where marks might be missing, if the student met the overall programme learning outcomes.

83.3. The locus of decision making would be the exam boards, though difficult cases and possible exceptions should be escalated to the EACP for consideration. A key principle was that in uncertain cases, decisions should usually be in favour of the student.

83.4. It was uncertain how wide-spread the impact of the MAB would be, but it was anticipated that it would require a significant additional workload. It was likely that the border-line cases where students were near grade boundaries, would be where focus was required. Some students might also be unhappy with decisions, and it was proposed that they be given the option to wait until all marks were received before receiving their classification.

83.5. UCL and the Russell Group were working closely with professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) to ensure institutional practice met the requirements for new graduates. However, it was possible that current students could need elements of learning carried over to their next year of study to meet PRSB requirements.

83.6. It was queried how administrators should deal with missing marks for Portico, the student records system and noted that work was underway to deal with operational and practical matters. Care would be required to ensure that operationalising the MAB mitigation did not lead to further problems. A further concern for some faculties was that key staff intended to boycott exam boards, making it difficult to hold them. This would need consideration at senior faculty level.

83.7. Student representatives requested that clear communications were provided on assessment mitigation, as many students were very anxious about the MAB and whether it could affect graduating. It was suggested that the guidance needed to be in plain English and drafted on the basis that students were able to understand it.

83.8. EdCom agreed with the proposals and guiding principles outlined in Paper EDCOM 6-08 (22-23) and would discuss assessment mitigation in future meetings, with EACP input.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

84.   UCL Careers Annual Report 2021-22
84.1.   Received – the report at EDCOM 6-05 (22-23).

85.   Approval of UCL Academic Partnerships
85.1.   Approved - the academic partnerships recommended by the Academic Partnerships Review Group (APRG) at EDCOM 6-06 (22-23).

86.   Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups
86.1.   Approved the minutes of the Programme and Module Approval Panel (PMAP) held on 29 September 2022 at EDCOM 6-07 (22-23).

87.   Any Other Business
87.1.   None received.

88.   Dates of Next Meeting
88.1.   The dates of the EdCom meetings for the rest of the 2022-23 session are:

- Monday 5 June 2023, 14.30-16.00 (Extraordinary meeting)
- Tuesday, 27 June 2023, 14.00 - 16:30
- Tuesday 25 July 2023, 14:00 - 16:30

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