Education Committee

25 July 2023

Minutes (Confirmed)

Present:

Professor Kathleen Armour (Chair)

Professor Simon Banks; Ms Karen Barnard; Dr Nicole Brown; Mr Shaban Chaudhary; Professor Parama Chaudhury; Mr Ian Davis; Professor Sally Day; Dr Julie Evans; 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 Margaret Mayston; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho; Professor Mary Richardson; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Hazel Smith; Ms Issy Smith; Professor Olga Thomas; Ms Lizzie Vinton; Dr Nalini Vittal; Professor Nicola Walshe; Dr Kathryn Woods and Professor Stan Zochowski.

In attendance: Ms Sally Mackenzie (Item 4) and Mr Ashley Doolan (Secretary).

Apologies: Ms June Hedges; Professor Arne Hofmann; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva; Ms Julia Wojciechowska.

Part I: Preliminary Business

110.   Welcome and Announcements

110.1.   The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, and extended a specific welcome to new members, Ms Marie Gallgher, interim Registrar, Mr Matteo Fumagalli, Head of Education and Student Experience in (Social and Historical Sciences), and the three new Students; Union sabbatical officers, Mr Muhammad Shaban Chaudhary, Ms Issy Smith, and Mr Ahmad Ismail. She also welcomed back Megan Gerrie in her role as observer on behalf of the Office of the President and Provost.

111.   Minutes of the Previous Meeting

111.1.   **Approved** – the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 June 2023 [EdCom Minutes 96-112, 2022-23] at EDCOM 9-01 (22-23), with one minor correction.

112.   Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

112.1.   It was noted that there we no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere in the agenda for this meeting.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

113.   Draft Statement of Excellence in Education and Student Experience

113.1. Received - a paper at EDCOM 9-02 (22-23) presented by the Chair, outlining the Draft Statement of Excellence in Education and Student Experience, which replaced what was previously referred to as the UCL Education Framework, and was the outcome of the institution wide conversations under Project One of the Education Strategy.

113.2. EdCom was broadly supportive of the revised Statement, noting its clear articulation of the current and future ambitions in this area of UCL's work, and its usefulness in communicating this ambition to internal and external audiences. The Chair noted her desire that this clearer statement of ambition would help to contribute to UCL's reputation as an institution that strove for excellence in its education, as well as its research.

113.3. During discussion, two specific points of feedback were raised and agreed. The first was to reframe ambition two to talk about staff who teach or support teaching, rather than using the term "education-focused" which was felt to exclude staff on joint teaching and research contracts. The second was to bolster the visibility within ambition six of the employability of our graduates.

113.4. **Approved** – the Draft Statement of Excellence in Education and Student Experience at paper EDCOM 9-02 (22-23), with the minor changes noted. The Chair commented on the need to continue work on identifying what makes a UCL education truly distinctive. She noted that Professor Katherine Holt had been asked to work with the Chair to look at ways in which this could be done.

114.   Programme Excellence: First Draft Proposal

114.1. Received – a paper at EDCOM 9-03 (22-23) presented by Ms Lizzie Vinton, outlining the draft proposals for Phase one of the Programme Excellence work, which was being conducted under Project Two of the Education Strategy. Ms Vinton presented the proposals and outlined the steps that been taken to reach this point, including consultation with various key stakeholder groups, such as the Academic Advisory Group constituted from the Vice Deans Education, and the Higher Education Development and Support Institute (HEDS). She noted that the proposals were also being looked at by an Academic Board Academic Impact Assessment Group. Ms Vinton asked EdCom to consider the proposed direction of travel and confirm its endorsement for the next phase of work.

114.2. EdCom warmly welcomed the presentation and corresponding draft proposals and thanked Ms Vinton for their clarity and ambition. It was widely agreed that the work detailed was timely and, while challenging, should lead to significant gains for faculties, departments, and their students. The following aspects of the proposals were noted:

   i.   That the intention was not to restructure UCL's portfolio for the sake of it, but to empower faculties to make decisions that made the most sense academically, operationally, and in support of their students. It was widely accepted that there was a need to tidy up unnecessary and unintentional curricular complexity.

   ii.   That the next phase of the programme would involve undertaking operational and academic impact assessments of the proposed directions of travel, prior to undertaking work with Faculty steering groups. The steering groups would be asked to first consider the definitive list of programmes that they would carry forward, and then commence work on reviewing the structure of their curricula.

iii. That the proposals included a review of the structure of the academic year to see where it may be possible for faculties that wished to participate to introduce, for example, a January assessment period for Term 1 only modules, or a series of extra-curricular activities in Term 3, centred around themes such as the Grand Challenges and Sustainability.

114.3. During the subsequent discussion, it was noted that there was clear support from students for some of the proposals in the paper, particularly the proposal to introduce a January assessment period. It was felt that this would improve mental wellbeing, and reduce the pressure currently felt during the Term 3 assessment period. The flexibility for faculties to decide on the structures that worked best for them was also commended and was felt to be crucial for the success of the project. Members also requested that material be produced to assist in the communication of the project aims within their areas of UCL, and it was confirmed that this was already planned.

114.4. **Approved** – the stated principles and direction of travel for the Programme Excellence work as outlined in paper EDCOM 9-03 (22-23) with thanks to Ms Vinton noted for all the hard work done to get to this point.

115. Department and Faculty Education Plans

115.1. Received - a paper at EDCOM 9-04 (22-23) presented by Professor Parama Chaudhury and Professor Norbert Pachler, detailing the regulations for the new Department and Faculty Education Plans, which had replaced the Annual Student Experience Review as UCL's annual quality assurance and enhancement process, as agreed at the November meeting of EdCom.

115.2. EdCom received an overview of the process that is due to run in 2023-24 and was reminded that the purpose of the Department and Faculty Education Plans was to focus attention on addressing 1 to 2 key issues, as identified through agreed education and student experience metrics, such as student outcomes and student satisfaction data. EdCom noted that the process would be managed through the accountability of HoDs to their Deans, and Deans to UMC, as well as through the formal education governance structure, through FECs, QSC and EdCom.

115.3. EdCom discussed the proposed regulations and agreed to amend the sections that referred to the outcomes of committee consideration, for example the evaluation of Faculty Education Plans at QSC, replacing the prescriptive list of specific outcomes with greater flexibility for the relevant committee to act as appropriate. It was felt that this would enable the relevant committee to take the right action for the circumstances presented. While a proposal to add the collection of good practice to the process as part of the action plan was discussed, EdCom agreed that it would be better for good practice to be identified through the evaluation of the impact of activity by a convening body, such as the FEC or QSC, rather than self-nominated by departments.

115.4. **Approved** – the proposed regulations in paper EDCOM 9-04 (22-23)

116. Student Academic Representation Regulations

116.1. Received – a paper at EDCOM 9-05 (22-23) presented by Dr Kathryn Woods containing proposed amendments to the regulations in Chapter 9, Section 6: Student Academic Representation of the Academic Manual, which had been endorsed by the Student Staff Partnership Committee and Education Policy Scrutiny Panel. It was noted that the following changes were proposed:

     i.   That ownership of the regulations, and the policy lead for student representation, should move from the discontinued Quality Review Subcommittee to the Student Staff Partnership Committee.

     ii.   That all student academic representatives must be elected, and that in cases of a single nomination, an election should still be held to ensure that representatives had a mandate from their constituent student body.

     iii.   That Chairs of Department Student Societies should be invited to join the Student Staff Consultative Committee.

     iv.   A simplification of the terms of reference for Student Staff Consultative Committee meetings, ensuring that issues raised by students were not crowded out by other business.

116.2. **Approved** – the proposed changes to the regulations in paper EDCOM 9-05 (22-23) without amendments.

117. Proposal for a Digital Education and Student Experience Committee

117.1. Received – a paper at EDCOM 9-06 (22-23) presented by Dr Kathryn Woods, proposing the establishment of a new subcommittee of Education Committee, with responsibility for overseeing developments in digital education and the online student experience, including providing strategic input and oversight of the works of the ISD Student Experience, Digital Education and Campus Experience Change Portfolios.

117.2. EdCom noted that the proposed subcommittee was intended to incorporate and take over the work being undertaken by a number of standing working groups that currently sat outside the formal education governance structure. It was also intended to capture aspects of the educational experience that are currently outside the terms of reference of the other extant subcommittees. Additionally, in discussion it was agreed that:

     i.   The group would have a role to play in shaping developments in UCL's assessment delivery strategy, alongside other existing subcommittees.

     ii.   That representation from Faculty Learning Technology Leads should be sought as part of the membership of the subcommittee.

117.3. **Approved** – the proposal to establish the Digital Education and Student Experience Committee as a subcommittee of EDCOM as detailed in paper EDCOM 9-06 (22-23). Invitations to join the committee would be circulated over the coming weeks.

118. Student Survey Policy

118.1. Received – a paper at EDCOM 9-07 (22-23) presented by Professor Parama Chaudhury and Dr Kathryn Woods, proposing the introduction of an institutional policy covering the management of student experience surveys, which it was noted would be part of a wider piece of work on student voice.

118.2. EdCom noted that the proposed policy aimed to address several examples of poor or questionable practice in UCL's current use and management of surveys. Some of the proposals included:

     i.   Agreeing and publishing a timetable of key student experience surveys each academic year, accompanied with a clear direction that no other institutional student survey should run at the same time.

      ii.   Guiding departments, faculties, and teams across UCL away from running surveys where they are not the most appropriate method for collecting information, encouraging the use of other methods, such as polls or focus groups, but also providing guidance on how to design and use surveys appropriately when that is the right method.

      iii.   Outlining the ethical and legal considerations that teams should consider prior to initiating a survey. For example, raising awareness of the data protection risks associated with collecting and storing information that may enable the identification of individuals.

      iv.   Setting a clear expectation that students should not be surveying other students, particularly in the execution of academic representation work.

118.3. EdCom discussed the proposals and noted that it would be crucial to engage with areas of the institution that are not traditionally connected with or led by our education governance to ensure the success of the policy. It was also noted that any references to collection, retention, and disposal of information within the draft policy should be aligned with our existing policies, such as the retention schedule.

118.4. **Approved** – the proposed Student Survey Policy detailed in EDCOM 9-07 (22-23), noting the suggestions made.

119. Update from Education Policy Scrutiny Panel

119.1. Received – an oral update from Mr Zak Liddell, Director of Education Services, on the work currently being undertaken by the Education Policy Scrutiny Panel. He confirmed that work would be done in the 2023-24 academic year to review UCL's lecture capture policies, and that an interim updated policy would be published for 2023-24. He also confirmed that the working group looking at updates to the Attendance Monitoring Policy for September 2023 would report back in mid-August.

120. Graduate outcomes 2020-21: Comparison Data

120.1. Received – a paper at EDCOM 9-08 (22-23) presented by Ms Karen Barnard, Director of the Higher Education Development and Support Institute (HEDS), on the latest Graduate Outcomes Survey data. In introducing the paper, it was noted that this data pertained to the cohort which graduated in June 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also noted that HESA had changed its survey methodology since the previous survey, specifically:

      i.   Discontinuing chasing up responses from overseas graduates through phone calls alongside the email reminders. There had been a notable drop in the response rate of overseas students, from 43% in the last survey to 18% in this.

      ii.   Removing the 'due to enter employment within the next month' category, forcing graduates who had recently completed postgraduate taught study following their undergraduate award to record themselves as unemployed.

120.2. EdCom noted that UCL's outcomes remained competitive. It also noted that UCL ranked 5th in the Russell Group for the proportion of graduates in highly skilled work, and 2nd in the Russell Group for two of the three graduate voice questions, including confirming that they were making use of the skills gained on their programme.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

121.   Education Risk Register

121.1. Noted – the updated register of education-related risks which had been submitted to the Audit and Risk Committee of Council at EDCOM 9-09 (22-23).

122.   Amendments to chapter 9: Quality Review Framework 2023-24

122.1. Approved – the amendments to Chapter 9 of the Academic Manual EDCOM 9-10 (22-23).

123.   Amendments to the Timetabling Policy 2023-24

123.1. Approved – the amendments to the Timetabling Policy EDCOM 9-11 (22-23).

124.   Approval of new programmes of study

124.1. Approved – the new programmes of study recommended by PMAP EDCOM 9-12 (22-23).

125.   Minutes of sub committees and working groups

125.1. Approved – the minutes of the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Subcommittee held on 7 November 2022 EDCOM 9-13 (22-23).

125.2. Approved – the minutes of the Student Staff Partnership Committee held on 11 May 2023 EDCOM 9-14 (22-23).

125.3. Approved – the minutes of the Student Access and Success Committee held on 4 May 2023 EDCOM 9-15 (22-23).

126.   Any Other Business

126.1. The Chair noted her thanks to all Education Committee members for their work during the 2022-23 academic year, noting the range of challenges that the committee had been faced with.

127.   Dates of Next Meeting

127.1. The dates of the EdCom meetings for the 2023-24 academic year would be circulated once agreed.

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August 2023