Education Committee

27 April 2021

Confirmed Minutes

Present:

Professor Deborah Gill (Chair)

Dr Simon Banks; Mr Ayman Benmati; Professor Clare Brooks; Dr Nicole Brown; Ms Yasmeen Daoud; Mr Ian Davis; Professor Sally Day; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce; Professor Alistair Greig; Ms June Hedges; Professor Arne Hofmann; Professor Jane Holder; Dr Rachel King; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Ms Viktoria Makai; Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva; Professor Chloe Marshall; Dr Helen Matthews; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Mr Derfel Owen; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Bill Sillar; Professor Sam Smidt; Dr Hazel Smith; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Professor Olga Thomas, Ms Lizzie Vinton and Dr Stan Zochowski.

In attendance: Ms Joanne Moles (Minute 57); Professor Simon Walker (Minute 57); Ms Karen Barnard (Minute 58), Ms Amy Lourenco (Minute 58), Professor Parama Chaudhury (Minute 59), Ms Anniina Wikman-Yates (Minute 61 and 62), Ms Leigh Kilpert (for Ms Megan Gerrie); Mr Dan Derricott (Secretary) and Mr Rob Traynor (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from: Dr Ali Abolfathi, Ms Wendy Appleby; Ms Megan Gerrie and Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho.

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Part I: Preliminary Business

54.   Minutes of the Previous Meeting

54.1.   Approved – the Minutes of the previous EdCom meetings held on:

-   23 February 2021 [EdCom Minutes 40-53, 2020-21] at EDCOM 4-01 (20-21).

55.   Matters Arising from the Minutes

55A   Amendment to Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2020-21
[EdCom Minute 41A, 23.02.21]

55A.1   Received - the paper at 4-02 (20-21), the updated EdCom Terms of Reference and membership, discussed at the previous meeting.

55A.2 EdCom welcomed the following new members:

- Professor Deborah Gill – Interim Vice-Provost (Education & Student Experience) ex officio as the new EdCom Chair and
- Mr Dan Derricott (Deputy Director of Academic Services and Head of Academic Policy and Quality Assurance), the new Secretary.

Nine elected members of Academic Board (AB)

- Professor Paola Pedarzani (Division of Biosciences).
- Professor Sally Day (Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering).
- Dr Nicole Brown (Institute of Education).
- Dr Stan Zochowski (Department of Physics and Astronomy).
- Dr Joana Jacob Ramalho (School of European Languages, Culture and Society - SELCS).
- Dr Ali Abolfathi (Department of Mechanical Engineering).
- Dr Elvira Mambetisaeva (Division of Biosciences).
- Dr Rachel King (Institute of Archaeology).
- Professor Chloe Marshall (Institute of Education).

55A.3 EdCom noted that the newly elected AB members' years of service would be counted as starting from the 2021-22 academic year. There may be further changes to EdCom terms of reference and membership dependent on AB's review of committee governance and possible suggestions from the new Provost, who was considering UCL's structures.

55B   UCL Student Attendance Policy

[EdCom Minute 45, 23.02.21]

55B.1 EdCom had previously discussed the proposed student attendance policy, which aimed to provide information and guidance on the process and management of "RegisterUCL", the student attendance recording system for undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) students.

55B.2 EdCom was informed that the Registrar, the Director of Access and Admissions and the Director of Academic Services were meeting soon to discuss implementation of the policy and in particular the possible impact on existing regulations such as the barring policy. It was anticipated that this will then be discussed by the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (ARQASC), and then submitted for final approval to EdCom.

55C   Teaching Operation Model and Academic Planning
[EdCom Minute 47, 23.02.21]

55C.1 EdCom had previously discussed the Teaching Operating Model and plans for the wider re-opening of UCL in the next session. The Chair provided an update on the progress of the Operating Model and noted that senior leadership groups from the UCL Education and Operations domains continued to work together to develop it. This had involved wide consultation, including discussions with Faculty Deans and Faculty Tutors.

55C.2 The [Operating Model] was now published for staff (UCL password protected) and the practical implications were being worked through, such the requirements for timetabling, space and teaching and learning. This activity was going well, though the challenge of operationalising the Model continued.

55C.3 EdCom will be kept updated with the progress of the Operating Model for 2021-22 and the plans to further open the campus.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

56.   Module Registration – Targeted Support to Reduce Student Rejections

56.1.   Received - the paper at 4-08 (20-21) introduced by the Director of Education Services and Transformation (note the item was discussed earlier than listed in the agenda). The paper outlined a proposal to address high volumes of student module choice rejections, a major concern regularly reported through student feedback and identified by the Student Experience Transformation (SET) programme.

56.2.   Students are always disappointed with not being able to get their module choices and can often be confused by the complicated structure of some programmes. This affects both satisfaction and their ability to make rational and realistic choices. Over 7,000 rejections were recorded on the student records system and whilst comparatively small in comparison to the 200,000 module choices made overall, this led to great dissatisfaction for the affected students. Analysis conducted by the SET Board showed that 30 modules (from 6500) accounted for 20% of the rejections, with limited capacity often cited as the rationale for rejection. Furthermore, a significant number of students (almost 2000) were given no reason for rejection.

56.3.   The SET Board intended to bring wider module selection data to a future EdCom meeting for further discussion. In the meantime it proposed to establish a Task Group to take some targeted and pragmatic actions to begin addressing the issues in time for the start of 2021-22. This included proposals to remove "blank" and "N/A" responses from the Portico reasons for module rejection, to ensure greater transparency of decisions and a suggestion to work with the departments that managed the 30 modules with the high rejection numbers to identify ways to avoid such high levels in future.

56.4. There was broad support for the proposals from EdCom members who considered it to be a sensible and practical response to an important student concern. It was asked whether the Task Group might include representation from multi-disciplinary programmes such as the BASc. It was noted that the relevant Faculty Tutor concerned intended to join the Task Group, though the Group's initial focus would be on modules, rather than at programme level.

56.5. **Agreed:** that EdCom approves the establishment of the Task Group and the actions proposed to address the issues of student discontent on module choice. EdCom to be kept informed of progress.
Action: Derfel Owen

57.   Digital Assessment Project Update (Standing Agenda Item)

57.1. The Examinations Manager (AS) and the Academic Lead, UCL Arena provided EdCom with the regular update on the Digital Assessment Project (DAP).

57.2. EdCom noted the following:

a) Phase 3 of the DAP continued, focussing on the delivery of the Operating Model. The AssessmentUCL platform was being used for all centrally managed exams.
b) The number of centrally managed exam candidatures had increased significantly on last year, with almost double the number of exams (1080) and 17,500 students rising from the 7,851 students in 2019-20.
c) An early emerging issue was that some students were leaving it late to submit their assessments. Amplification of the existing messaging was planned to ensure greater awareness of the time limits and the need to submit on time, with examples of communications provided in the slides.
d) The WiseFlow system behind AssessmentUCL, had a proven track record for robustness at other universities and was performing well at UCL. 72 exams had taken place on the first day of the exam season, with an 86% submission rate reported so far. Nonetheless, contingency plans were in place should the system fail and exams need to pivot on to Moodle, as used for online exams last year.
e) Marking would be conducted as in previous years and not through AssessmentUCL, though a small pilot was planned this year. Grade integration with Portico was also being trialled and it was hoped to roll out both in future years.
f) Phase 4 of the project would be underway from June and will on-board the departments which choose to use the platform, further integration with Portico and a focus on improving the marker experience. A ChangeMakers project was also planned to involve students in work on student communications.

57.3. It was noted that AssessmentUCL was integrated with Turnitin, the plagiarism detection tool, with all submissions going through it on the platform. Although an alternative tool was available within the WiseFlow solution, it was decided to stay with Turnitin as staff and students were accustomed to its use over many years at UCL.

57.4. It was also noted that the Exams Team was setting up central communications to students and that the information and messaging would be shared with faculties. Advice would also be provided in responding to queries to ensure consistency in practice (e.g. when students try to submit by alternative means).

57.5. The Library had received a number of student queries regarding past exam papers and it was noted that the 2019-20 papers had not been provided for its archive due to the pandemic.
Agreed: The Exams Team to forward the 2019-20 exam papers to the Library.
Action: Joanne Moles

57.6. The Chair thanked all the teams and staff involved in delivering the AssessmentUCL platform and online exams. This was an impressive amount of work to ensure that student assessment continued at UCL.

57.7. As a standing item on the EdCom agenda for the session, reports on the progress of AssessmentUCL would continue to be brought to each meeting. The slides from the presentation were available on the EdCom MS Teams site and SharePoint.

58. UCL Careers Framework: Pillars of Employability

58.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 4-03 (20-21) introduced by Ms Karen Barnard Director of UCL Careers Service and Ms Amy Lourenco, Senior Careers Consultant, UCL Careers.

58.2. The paper was previously discussed by the Student Experience Committee (StEC) and its suggestions fed into the draft paper. This outlined a new framework for UCL, the "Pillars of Employability", which intended to embed employability into the curriculum and prepare students for the future. This was based on recommendations by Advance HE and would help create a bespoke definition of employability for UCL and encourage student engagement. A curriculum map and audit tool had also been developed to aid programme design and review and to identify gaps on employability in provision. The tool had already been used in developing UCL East programmes and was currently being piloted in three programmes at the Bloomsbury campus.

58.3. It was intended to produce a student-facing version of the Pillars and InkPath, a digital portfolio app, was already in use to help students to frame their employability learning and track progress, both in terms of their programmes of study and for co-curricular activity. The anticipated key outcomes were that students would be enabled to articulate the skills developed at UCL and to access the coherent support and opportunities available for them to access on their journey.

58.4. EdCom broadly welcomed the Pillars of Employability and a number of points were noted during the discussion. It was suggested that the Pillars should be explicitly linked to, and in support of academic learning outcomes rather than being seen as something separate or in competition. There was some hesitancy expressed about conducting another curriculum mapping exercise, which could generate fatigue rather than engagement. More thought was required as to how to integrate the framework with the academic curriculum and to the wider education strategy.

58.5. It was noted that existing integrated work-based learning opportunities (such as internships) were particularly valuable, though resource intensive. They nonetheless presented students with networking opportunities and real work experience, as well as skill development. It would be helpful to focus on supporting students to understand how they could already develop skills through their courses. Curricula were already very full and students stretched by them, so it was important to focus on the areas of most need. It was further suggested to map those programmes already embedding many of the activities in the framework and the employability rates/outcomes.

58.6. It was queried whether the Global Citizenship programme was also being linked into the Framework and noted that, whilst the programme was currently suspended and under review, UCL Careers was also contributing to StEC's Co-Curricular Provision Working Group which was over-seeing this work.

58.7. **Approved** – the UCL Pillars of Employability framework. EdCom also endorsed the plans for further activities outlined in the Paper, though advised UCL Careers to take note of the points raised in the discussion.
Action – Karen Barnard and Amy Lourenco to note

59. Assessment Mitigation and the Black Asian And Minority Ethnic (BAME) Awarding Gap

59.1. Dr Julie Evans and Professor Parama Chaudhury gave a presentation on preliminary research on the effects of the No Detriment Policy (NDP) applied to the 2019-20 assessments and classifications on the BAME awarding gap. This had been requested by the former EdCom Chair and the UG 2019-20 module assessment data and outcomes had been analysed and compared to recent years.

59.2. The following points were noted:

a) The classification of degree outcomes for BAME students had improved on previous years as it had for the White student population, with greater numbers of UG first and upper second-class degrees and PGT merits and distinctions awarded (as previously noted by EdCom). The awarding gap for UG BAME students had reduced from approximately 3% to 1%. This effect occurred across all faculties except Brain Sciences and had disappeared in

Engineering. The gap in first class degrees, which had been significant in previous years, had also reduced, though still present (at around 11%).

b) BAME student marks had a tendency for greater variability in previous years and this had been reduced by the NDP. As the best 50% of the assessment marks were counted and poorer marks could be jettisoned, this had helped to improve BAME students' overall outcomes, as it did for other students. There was some evidence that BAME students performed better with on-line exams, assessments and coursework for their individual marks.

c) BAME non-continuation data was also analysed and this fell from 8% in 2018-29 to 3% last year. This had been more than twice the level of White students before the pandemic but was now below the non-continuation rate for White students.

d) Greater analysis was required, particularly with faculties, at a more local modular level. As the BAME awarding gap had reduced, there may be lessons and practices to consider retaining after the pandemic and a return to more campus teaching. Further exploration and thinking was required on how this might affect UCL assessment policy.

e) It was noted that caution was required for drawing firm conclusions from the preliminary data and it would be important for faculties and departments to analyse the data at a more local level. Resources were requested to repeat the analysis for the current session, once the data was available.

59.3. The following points were raised in the discussion:

a) It was important to keep in mind the barriers and challenges identified in previous tracking of the BAME awarding gap. For instance, whilst it was welcome that BAME students were awarded more First-class degrees, the gap would still remain should White students achieve a similar increase, indicating that the underlying reasons were not really addressed.

b) It was agreed that working closely with faculties to analyse the data at modular level would be very important to understand the impact of module choice and assessment on the overall outcomes. It was expected that data would be made available to the faculties soon.

c) It was apparent from the early analysis that the NDP had a greater positive impact on BAME student outcomes than targeted interventions previously taken to reduce the awarding gap. Further attention to the effects of the policy, as well as on online assessment methods was required to ascertain whether this might be utilised in future assessment strategy. It was further suggested that any impact on changing assessment loads on module marks should also be scrutinised.

d) It was suggested that re-consideration of the term "BAME" might be required as it had been subject to some recent public criticism and an on-going debate. However, it was noted that the BAME Awarding gap project had shown that the gap was real and that there was value in the work conducted over a number of years. The project had taken care to consider individual ethnicities,

but this was often difficult due to small numbers of students, necessitating aggregation to a wider BAME group.

59.4. The slides from the presentation were available on the EdCom MS Teams site and SharePoint.

59.5. **Agreed**: to submit the full report with further analysis of the data to a later meeting.
Action: Dr Julie Evans and Professor Parama Chaudhury

60. Degree Apprenticeships Steering Group Update

60.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 4-04 (20-21) introduced by the Secretary. This outlined the Degree Apprenticeships Steering Group (DASG), established by EdCom to oversee the pilot of the five PGT programmes with 124 apprentices currently enrolled. The paper summarised the context of apprenticeships, UCL's current provision, the changing regulatory and inspection regime, and the DASG workplan.

60.2. It was reported that the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) had been given responsibility for all apprenticeships and it was expected that there would be a monitoring visit of the UCL apprenticeship programmes within the next two years, followed by a full inspection. This meant that as apprenticeships fell under the same regulatory regime as schools and colleges, UCL was obliged to monitor and evidence the learning of individual apprentices in a different way than it does for other students. Clarity was required not only on the risks from failing to comply with Ofsted, including potential loss of government funding for the programmes, but also on the wider strategic fit for apprenticeships at UCL. This also included opportunities for expanding provision, how the programmes would be managed and overseen in future and how they might fit with the new Provost's plans and revised Education Strategy.

60.3. It was noted that the demand for higher education Degree Apprenticeships was likely to increase. UCL was well placed to run these programmes. It was therefore important to have clarity on where the apprentice programmes, and any expansion thereof, would fit with wider UCL strategies. The DASG would continue to oversee the pilots, consider resourcing and governance and coordinate the programmes to ensure they were successful in the Ofsted inspections. EdCom would be kept updated on progress.

61. Degree Apprenticeships Framework

61.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 4-05 (20-21) presented by the Senior Policy Adviser (Education Partnerships). The paper outlined proposals for a new chapter in the Academic Manual that will include UCL's Framework for managing Degree Apprenticeships in 2021-22, which included the draft chapter. The paper had previously been considered by the DASG and by ARQASC.

61.2. The Framework for 2021-22 outlined UCL's approach to Degree Apprenticeships; the governance structure framing their delivery; the ways in which UCL's existing quality assurance mechanisms apply to Degree Apprenticeships; and the key characteristics and requirements relating to individual Degree Apprenticeship programmes and apprentices that do not apply to standard degree programmes. A full regulatory review of the existing provisions in the Academic Manual Chapters 1-4 and 6 would take place next year with any additional provisions or amendments made to either those Chapters or the Degree Apprenticeships Framework itself.

61.3. **Approved** – the Degree Apprenticeships Framework at EDCOM 4-05 (20-21).
Action: Anniina Wikman-Yates, Lizzie Vinton and the Secretary to note

62. Academic Manual Chapter 8: Academic Partnership Framework Annual Update

62.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 4-06 (20-21) introduced by the Senior Policy Adviser (Education Partnerships). The paper outlined proposed updates to the Academic Manual Chapter 8: Academic Partnership Framework. The Chapter was previously considered by AQRASC who recommended it for EdCom approval. The draft Chapter 8 would also be submitted to Research Degrees Committee (RDC) for approval of the provision related to research degrees.

62.2. EdCom was informed that most of the amendments were minor updates to terminology, which were clearly tracked into the draft Chapter 8 in the paper. A more substantial amendment was clarification that the Academic Policy and Quality Assurance team (Academic Services) did not formally approve agreements for partnerships that do not lead to UCL award of credit, though it reviews them for legal purposes.

62.3. **Approved** – the updates to the Academic Manual Chapter 8: Academic Partnerships Framework at EDCOM 4-06 (20-21).
Action: Anniina Wikman-Yates, Lizzie Vinton and the Secretary to note

63. MBA Qualification Descriptor

63.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 4-07 (20-21) presented by the Secretary. The paper outlined a proposed qualification descriptor for the Master of Business Administration (MBA), requested by the Programme and Module Approval Panel (PMAP) in order to help understanding of the characteristics that would differentiate a programme leading to an MBA rather than an alternative qualification at UCL (e.g. MSc, MA). The paper was also considered by ARQASC who recommended it for approval to EdCom.

63.2. It was noted that the proposed MBA descriptor was aligned with the Degree Characteristics Statements and the Subject Benchmark Statements published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and had made reference to the Association of

MBAs (AMBA) accreditation criteria. The PMAP Chair was supportive of the proposed descriptor.

63.3. **Approved** – the qualification descriptor for the MBA at EDCOM 4-07 (20-21).
Action: the Secretary and Chair of PMAP to note

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

64. Approval of New Programmes of Study

64.1. Approved - the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 4-09 (20-21).

65. Approval of New Academic Partnerships

65.1. Approved - the new academic partnerships recommended by the Academic Partnerships Review Group (APRG) at EDCOM 4-10 (20-21).

66. Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

66.1. Approved the minutes of ARQASC held on 22 September 2020 at EDCOM 4-11 (20-21).

66.2. Approved the minutes of ARQASC held on 11 February 2021 at EDCOM 4-12 (20-21).

66.3. Approved the minutes of PMAP held on 28 January 2021 at EDCOM 4-13 (20-21).

66.4. Approved the minutes of PMAP held on 25 February 2021 at EDCOM 4-14 (20-21).

66.5. Approved the minutes of the Quality Review Sub Committee (QRSC) held on 24 November 2020 at EDCOM 4-15 (20-21).

66.6. Approved the Minutes of the APRG held on 4 June 2019 at EDCOM 4-16 (20-21).

67. Suspensions of Regulations

67.1. Approved – the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 4-17 (20-21).

68. Dates of Next Meeting

68.1. The dates of the EdCom meetings for the rest of the 2020-21 session were:

- Thursday 10 June 2021 10.30am
- RESERVED MEETING Thursday 22 July 2021 10.30am

Meetings to be held on MS Teams.

Dan Derricott
EdCom Secretary

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 Academic Services [email: dan.derricott@ucl.ac.uk}

27 May 2021