Confirmed

Education Committee

30 April 2020

Minutes

Present:

Professor Anthony Smith (Chair)

Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Simon Banks; Mr Ian Davis; Mr Ashley Doolan; Dr Julie Evans; Professor Deborah Gill; Ms Kitty Guo; Ms June Hedges; Dr Arne Hofmann; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Ms Aatikah Malik; Dr Helen Matthews; Ms Emer O'Driscoll; Mr Derfel Owen; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Mike Porter; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Ms Ashley Slanina-Davies; Dr Sam Smidt; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Eva Sorensen; Dr Fiona Strawbridge and Professor Olga Thomas.

In attendance: Ms Katie Price (deputising for Ms Megan Gerrie); Ms Lizzie Vinton (Secretary) and Mr Rob Traynor (assisting the Secretary).

Observing the meeting: Ms Annabel Brown

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms Megan Gerrie; Dr Sandra Leaton-Gray; Mr Jim Onyemenam and Dr Jo Pearce.

Part I: Preliminary Business

54. Minutes of the last meeting

54.1. Approved – the minutes of the previous meeting at EDCOM 4-01 (19-20) held on 25 February 2020 (EdCom Minutes 40-53, 2019-20).

55. Matters arising from the minutes

55.1. All matters were covered in this meeting's agenda items.

56.   Chair's Action – UCL Qatar Covid 19 Contingency

56.1.   Received - the paper at EDCOM 4-02 (19-20).

56.2.   The Chair confirmed that the proposals for teaching and assessment were in line with the decisions of the special meeting of Academic Committee.

57.   Minutes of the Exceptional EdCom Meetings on COVID-19 Contingency Planning

57.1.   Approved - the minutes of the two exceptional EdCom meetings at papers EDCOM 4-03 (19-20) and EDCOM 4-04 (19-20).

57.2.   It was noted that the first meeting (6 March 2020) led to the establishment of the Exams and Assessment Contingency Panel (EACP) and that the second meeting (11 March 2020) considered recommendations for remote teaching and assessment to be formally considered and approved by Academic Committee (AC).

Part II: Matters for Discussion

58.   Exams and Assessments Contingency Panel: Summary of Agreed Actions

58.1.   Received - the paper at EDCOM 4-05 (19-20) introduced by the Director of Academic Services.

58.2.   The Chair thanked everyone involved in the EACP for the enormous amount of work which had been undertaken, and particularly highlighted the invaluable contributions from the Director of Academic Services, the Faculty Tutors and the Sabbatical Officers. The Panel had been keen to ensure that decision-making was as transparent as possible, and had consulted as widely as possible on each change. It was noted that the EACP minutes were open to the UCL community.

58.3.   Changes necessitated by the pandemic included amending 130,000 assessments - including arranging alternative assessments, online exams and the first year capstone project - re-writing 293 regulation algorithms, and ensuring that arrangements were put in place for the high number of derogations and variations still in use across UCL. Plans for testing and training were also being put in place.

58.4.   The No Detriment Policy for the MRes had just been agreed with the Chair of Research Degrees Committee and would involve giving students more time to complete their dissertation/ research project, and removing the separate dissertation/ project criterion from the classification so that it was based only on a weighted mean. Progression for 1+3 PGR programmes would be handled on a case-by-case basis.

59.   Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Guidance on Assessment and Covid-19

59.1.   Received - the paper at EDCOM 4-06 (19-20) introduced by the Director of Academic Services.

59.2.   EACP had ensured that all decisions were in line with the guidance on No Detriment Policies which had been issued by the Quality Assurance Agency.

60.   Draft Degrees Outcomes Statement

60.1.   Approved - the paper at EDCOM 4-07 (19-20) presented by the Academic Regulations Manager.

60.2.   The Office for Students had raised concerns about grade inflation across the sector. It's analysis of honours degree outcomes between 2010/11 and 2017/18 found an increase in the number of firsts and upper second class honours of 12%. In response, the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) had published a Statement of Intent asking providers to publish a 'Degree Outcomes Statement' analysing their institutional classification profile in order to ensure compliance with the Expectations of the Quality Code around protecting the value of qualifications and the OfS' ongoing conditions of registration on academic standards (B4 and B5). Statements would need to be scrutinised by an external expert, signed off by Council, and published online by the end of 2019-20.

60.3.   Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, UCL saw a decrease in 1/ 2.1 of -0.7%. While this contrasted with the OfS' figure of +5.8% for UCL, their data were based on 2010/11 to 2017/18 and HEIs had been asked to base their statements on data from the last five years. This meant that an increase had taken place between 2010/11 and 2013/14 but classifications had since been remarkably stable.

60.4.   EdCom welcomed the lack of grade inflation at UCL, and noted the positive outcomes for gender and low-participation areas. It was agreed that it would be important to include details of the BAME attainment project.

60.5.   The committee was asked to provide input for the final three sections of the statement. The small number of lower seconds and thirds awarded by UCL was acknowledged, although this was to be expected given our very high entry requirements. It was agreed that it would be important to highlight that recent changes to the regulations were designed to allow slightly more students to progress, but were likely to lead to an increase in lower awards. There was also discussion of the faculty data, which showed more variation than the UCL figure. Members noted that the data were based on the former classification regulations,

and that there would be greater homogeneity for 2018/19 entrants onwards. It was noted that some of the pre-2014/15 changes coincided with a drive by External Examiners to encourage use of the full range of marks. Interesting variations between faculties had been highlighted by the BAME attainment project and could also be included.

60.6. Endorsed – the draft UCL Degree Outcomes Statement 2019/20.

61. Proposed Revision to the UCL E-Learning Baseline

61.1. Approved – the paper at 4-08 (19-20), introduced by the Head of Digital Education.

61.2. The proposals aimed to improve the quality and consistency of e-learning as part of UCL's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This included rebranding the policy with the more up-to-date 'Connected Learning Baseline', and moving to a single baseline (rather than 'standard' and 'plus' versions) to assist all UCL programmes in the difficult process of moving to online delivery. The proposals aimed to provide ready-made templates, guidance for staff on how to structure resources, and help for students to navigate online environments.

61.3. EdCom welcomed the proposals and extended its thanks to the Digital Education team for their hard work on this. The committee agreed that this should be viewed as a means to support departments through this very challenging time, rather than a compliance exercise with a deadline for completion. The Head of Digital Education agreed to review the document to ensure that this messaging was consistent throughout. It was also suggested that a list of key contacts be included.

Action: Head of Digital Education

61.4. The Head of Liaison and Support Services, Library Services, asked for some stronger recommendations on reading lists, as these were used to ensure that resources were available to students, and to ensure compliance with copyright etc. It was also noted that online tutorials about intellectual property had been developed for UCL East, and these could be shared more widely across UCL.

61.5. EdCom also discussed the work being undertaken by Arena and Digital Education to create resources for staff designing online teaching. The team hoped to publish a growing offer by mid-May. It was also noted that the Joint Faculties had undertaken a survey of staff about online teaching, the results of which could provide useful data for designing resources.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

62. Approval of New Programmes

62.1. Approved – the new programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 4-09 (19-20).

63. Suspensions of Regulations

63.1. Approved – the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 4-10 (19-20).

64. Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

64.1. Approved – the minutes of the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub Committee held 11 February 2020 at EDCOM 4-11 (19-20).

64.2. Approved – the minutes of the Programme and Module Approval Panel held 12 December 2019 at EDCOM 4-12 (19-20).

64.3. Approved – the minutes of the Quality Review Sub Committee held 28 January 2020 EDCOM 4-13 (19-20).

Any Other Business

65. July Meeting Date

65.1. It was anticipated that the July meeting of EdCom would be needed. It was suggested that the date be pushed back slightly to 30 July to coincide with the timetable for exam boards, marks processing and results release. The new date would be confirmed by the secretary.

66. Covid-19 Longer-term Implications for Teaching Delivery

66.1. UCL was now looking to the next academic year and what changes might be needed to continue offering an excellent education to our students in these unprecedented circumstances. It was still too early to tell what level of social distancing might be required, but various contingencies were being explored, including how to deliver in-person classes with social distancing, how to enhance in-person classes with online learning, and how to deliver entirely online. Estates were establishing the numbers of students which could be accommodated with social distancing in various spaces, and OVPESA was considering how to make a remote education as rich and rewarding as possible.

66.2. Work was also underway to review UCL's portfolio to maximise our offer for next year. PMAP and Academic Services were overseeing a light-touch approach for handling urgent amendments to programmes and modules. Discussions were also taking place with colleagues in the Russell Group, and with the new Provost, Professor Michael Spence, who had a wealth of experience in education in publicly-funded comprehensive institutions.

66.3. The Chair thanked EdCom for the extensive and complex work which had been undertaken in a very short space of time to ensure that current and prospective students were supported as much as possible.

67.   Dates of Next Meeting

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

- Monday 8 June 2020 10.30am (Room B.05 Darwin Building)
- Thursday 30 July 2020 10.30am (Room 604 Institute of Education)

Lizzie Vinton

Secretary to EdCom

Academic Regulations Manager

Academic Services

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7 May 2020