Confirmed

Education Committee

30 July 2020

Minutes

Present:

Professor Deborah Gill (Chair for the meeting)

Dr Simon Banks; Mr Ayman Benmati, Professor Nora Colton; Ms Yasmeen Daoud, Mr Ian Davis, Mr Ashley Doolan; Ms Megan Gerrie; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Helen Matthews; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Professor Norbert Pachler; Dr Jo Pearce; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Sam Smidt; Dr Hazel Smith; Professor Eva Sorensen; Dr Fiona Strawbridge and Professor Olga Thomas.

In attendance: Ms Eleanor Millan, Ms Erin Saxon-Dyer; Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson, Professor Simon Walker, Ms Lizzie Vinton (Secretary) and Mr Rob Traynor (assisting the Secretary).

Apologies for absence: Professor Anthony Smith, Ms Wendy Appleby, Dr Julie Evans, Ms June Hedges, Dr Arne Hofmann, Dr Sandra Leaton-Gray, Mr Derfel Owen and Professor Mike Porter;

Observing the meeting: Mr Darren Payne (Academic Services)

Part I: Preliminary Business

79. Welcome

79.1. The meeting was chaired by the Chair of the Quality Review Sub-Committee (QRSC) as Professor Smith was unable to attend the meeting.

79.2. The Chair welcomed the new Students' Union (SU) sabbatical officers, Mr Ayman Benmati (Education Officer) and Ms Yasmeen Daoud (Welfare and International Officer) to the meeting.

80. Minutes of the last meeting
(See also Minute 81 below)

80.1. Approved – the minutes of the previous meeting at EDCOM 6-01 (19-20) held on 8 June 2020 (EdCom Minutes 68-78, 2019-20). This was subject to an amendment to Minute 71, Study Abroad 2020-21 (Exchange Students) to clarify that faculties can make the decision on reciprocity with partner institutions about their programmes. Therefore, if a partner institution did not accept outbound UCL students, the faculty could decide not to accept their inbound students (see also Minute 81.2 below).

81. Matters arising from the Minutes

Draft Student Attendance Policy
(EdCom Minute 70, 8 June 2020)

81.1. At the last meeting, EdCom had discussed the Draft Student Attendance Policy and was informed that the Here to Succeed team was aiming to implement a UCL-wide digital attendance monitoring solution, 'RegisterUCL'. This had been pushed back to January 2021 due to the impact of Covid-19, though the team were still working on Section 7 of the policy to incorporate the need for blended and/ or remote learning in autumn 2020. It would therefore be timely for EdCom to receive an update on this early in the next session. Agreed – that Here to Succeed/'RegisterUCL' be included as an agenda item for the first meeting of 2020-21 (October 2020).
Action – Secretary to note.

Study Abroad 2020-21
(EdCom Minute 71, 8 June 2020)

81.2. EdCom had discussed the issues affecting study abroad in 2020/21 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. EdCom had agreed not to cancel study abroad, unless it was legally required and to adopt a faculty-specific approach to it. The Director of Academic Services reported that faculties had since completed templates to outline their approach to study abroad. Current students had simultaneously been informing the Study Abroad Office of their preferred choices for next session (deadline 31 July). In a further development the Education and Operations Group had considered the effects of the loss of affiliate student income on the wider UCL finances and had requested that faculties also factor this in when making decisions on whether to accept incoming students, particularly from institutions with a long term relationship with UCL. This could also have longer term implications as some affiliate students would return later at postgraduate (PG) level.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

82. UCL Proposed Assessment Load Model

82.1. Approved - the paper at EDCOM 6-02 (19-20) introduced by Professor Simon Walker, Academic Lead, UCL Arena.

82.2. The paper outlined proposed guidance intended to ensure programme level consistency for the summative assessment load across UCL. This was particularly needed to support UCL's move towards replacing face-to-face invigilated exams in 20/21, with alternative assessments and likely greater diversification of assessment during the session.

82.3. The proposals had emerged from the Bronze/Sapphire Assessment Working Group, comprising representatives of all the UCL schools and Academic Services, which had conducted a review of practice across the sector and agreed the guidance following wide consultation. Previous iterations of the paper had been considered by the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (ARQASC), QRSC and most recently the Faculty Tutor Forum. The proposals had been further discussed with the new SU Education Officer.

82.4. Concerns were expressed that the guidance should be clear on the different assessment requirements and practices between disciplines and that there may be a need at times for programmes to deviate from the suggested assessment load outlined in the guidance. This may be particularly difficult for scientific disciplines where essays and written work were not the norm, e.g. large coding projects in computer science. It was suggested that where deviation from the suggested assessment load was required, the department should ensure that the rationale for this was made clear in the programme approval and amendment processes.

82.5. There was also a concern that colleagues might regard the guidance as mandatory, rather than for guidance. It was suggested that faculty tutors could help clarify this with colleagues when disseminating the guidance to their departments and in their Faculty Teaching Committees (FTC).

82.6. Agreed - to approve EDCOM 6-02 (19-20) the UCL Assessment Load Model, subject to ensuring that the document made clear that it was for guidance and not mandatory.
Action – Professor Simon Walker

83. Examinations and Assessments Contingency Panel (EACP) Summary of Agreed Actions

83.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 6-03 (19-20) introduced by the Director of Academic Services.

83.2. The paper provided a summary of the agreed actions (up to 9 July 2020) of the EACP, established by EdCom to consider potential mitigations for circumstances where teaching and assessment could not be delivered as planned. The paper was noted by EdCom and the EACP was thanked by the Chair for their hard work.

83.3. During the discussion it was reported that a number of faculties had received positive responses from external examiners regarding the use of the capstone assessment, with some stating that this was innovative and exemplary practice. It appeared that the capstone assessment was also well received by students and some faculties were considering retaining elements of synoptic assessments after the pandemic had receded and students were back at UCL.

83.4. It was reported that from the exam boards held so far, there had been an increase in the number of first class marks at undergraduate (UG) level. Preliminary figures showed that this had risen from 40% in 2019 to 55% so far this year. Many of the Faculty Tutors present attributed this to the no detriment arrangements where only the best 50% of final year marks were used in the classification. However, some faculties had noted an improvement in the quality of student work, perhaps helped by the removal of exam nerves. As grade inflation was a concern of the Office for Students (OfS), it would be important for UCL to be able to defend and provide a rationale for the assessment mitigation decisions taken in response to Covid 19. However as other institutions were also reporting higher exam results, this was likely to be a sector wide phenomenon.

83.5. Agreed – that Academic Services review the overall assessment outcomes after the exam boards had completed their work and report to EdCom next session for consideration.
Action – Dr Helen Matthews to lead

84. Postgraduate Taught New Programme Approval and Review Process

84.1. Approved - the paper at EDCOM 6-04 (19-20) and its annexes, presented by the UCL Pro-Vice-Provost (Postgraduate Education) and the Projects Administration Manager, Office of the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs - OVPESA).

84.2. The paper provided proposals to overhaul the current Postgraduate Taught (PGT) programme process leading up to the Programme and Module Approval Panel (PMAP). This followed a review by the PGT New Programme Development Review Working Group, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Provost (PG Education). Annexes to the paper included accompanying revisions of the Academic Manual Chapter 7: Programme and Module Approval and Amendment Framework.

84.3. The proposed changes included a new business case financial budgeting tool template, an improved market research requirement, a recommended Arena Centre workshop on developing new programmes and modules, and a probationary review to assess whether the new programme had met its business case and would be a viable part of the UCL PGT portfolio. The new UCL East programmes which had recently gone through PMAP, had contributed greatly to the revised process and were already undertaking some of the actions proposed. It was not expected that the proposals would increase staff workloads, but that they would rather improve and streamline the PGT programme approval process.

84.4. The probationary review was intended to help address low numbers on current PGT programmes (42% had low numbers) and would introduce an expectation that programmes meet their business case target numbers. This was a quality assurance mechanism with clear steps to follow where numbers were below expectations after two admissions cycles. Programmes would be required to complete a review form to be submitted to the UCL Planning Team with an action plan to address this. The Planning Team would oversee this review and determine whether the programmes had addressed the concerns on viability and if the probationary period should continue. The Planning Team will also incorporate an assessment of new PGT programme viability as part of the annual Student Number Planning Round. Faculties and departments would make any decisions on whether to withdraw a

programme failing to meet its business case. However, it was hoped that earlier identification of such programmes would enable action to be taken to put them back on course.

84.5. It was noted that the Arena Centre workshops on developing new programmes would be co-led by Communications and Marketing (CAM) and Careers. Although optional, it was highly recommended that programme directors attended the interactive workshop which will support programme teams to produce a proposal ready for submission to PMAP. It was noted that Arena would focus on the content of the programmes and help programmes to identify what was innovative in the proposed offering.

84.6. It was queried whether CAM would be able to offer market research in greater depth than currently provided, for example with surveys of potential students. It was noted that CAM would be able to provide their current service and market analysis, though departments would need to pay for any additional research. It was suggested that this was made clear in any guidance for departments.

84.7. It was suggested that once the proposals were implemented, it would be timely to then focus on the process for identifying and addressing existing programmes with low numbers and where appropriate, consider their withdrawal.

84.8. Agreed – to approve EDCOM 6-04 (19-20), the PGT Taught New Programme Approval and Review Process.

85. Interruptions of Study Procedures 2020-21

85.1. Approved - the paper at EDCOM 6-05 (19-20), introduced by the Faculty Tutor Engineering and Chair of the Interruptions of Study Working Group.

85.2. EdCom had approved the recommendations of the Interruptions of Study Task Group and the revised regulations for Chapter 3 of the Academic Manual in June 2019. However, implementation of the regulations was then postponed pending the development of the online workflow to support it by the Academic Model Project (AMP), which would be ready for 2020-21.

85.3. In the meantime the Working Group had continued to meet and further refine the Interruptions of Study policy and processes, ensuring alignment with the online workflow. Further helpful feedback was also received from the outgoing SU Education Officer. The majority of amendments were not substantive policy changes, but improvements to syntax and layout. The clearer policy and processes were not expected to increase staff work-loads and should make life easier for staff.

85.4. It was further noted that accompanying changes to the Extenuating Circumstances (EC) Procedure and EC Form were also submitted to EdCom in the papers on Academic Manual updates for 2020-21.

85.5. ARQASC had further discussed the challenges of introducing a new policy during the Covid-19 pandemic, but after careful consideration and support from the SU had agreed that the new policy provided significant benefits for students and departments. Work was also

underway to update the [Interrupting or Withdrawing from your Studies](#) webpage on the Students' website to align it with the new regulations, as well as developing further guidance for departments, particularly around return to study planning. Briefing materials and communications for both staff and students were also in development.

85.6. Agreed – to approve EDCOM 6-05 (19-20), the Interruptions of Study Procedure. The Chair thanked the Working Group and the SU for their hard work in developing and refining the procedure.

86. Under 18s Online Policy

86.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 6-06 (19-20), introduced by the Chair of ARQASC and the Projects Administration Manager, Office of the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs - OVPESA).

86.2. The paper summarised current UCL policies for students under 18 years of age and high-lighted practice elsewhere in the sector, at the University of Birmingham and the Open University. EdCom was asked whether the existing UCL policies needed to be augmented or enhanced due to the necessity to teach on-line arising from the Covid 19 pandemic.

86.3. It was noted that current UCL policies included substantial documents on safe-guarding from the Widening Participation team in Student and Registry Services, as well as Human Resources (HR) policies. However, this was primarily geared towards the direct attendance of the under 18 student and did not so clearly relate to online teaching. It was suggested that further discussion with HR would be required to clarify where the policy needed to be located within the university.

86.4. It was suggested that the current practice was relatively clear for departments in terms of allocating personal tutors to the students, with mandatory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. However, there was potential weakness in monitoring these students when they were attending different teaching events outside of the department. More detailed guidance on how to manage this for on-line teaching would be welcomed.

86.5. It was also noted that under 18 students would need to be considered for any extra-curricular online activities they might become involved in. Further thought was required on guidance for this.

86.6. Agreed – that the paper authors discuss with HR the arrangements for online teaching for under-18 students and where the associated policies should sit and consider whether further guidance might be developed for staff. EdCom Chair's action to be used should decisions be required for the next session and before EdCom's first meeting in October 2020.
Action – the Chair, Professor Norbert Pachler and Dr Erin Saxon-Dyer.

87.   Changes to the Academic Manual for 2020-21

87.1. Approved – the paper at EDCOM 6-07 (19-20), introduced by the Secretary.

87.2. The Secretary noted that the paper outlined the proposed changes to the following chapters in the Academic Manual:

- Chapter 1: Student Recruitment and Admissions
- Chapter 2: Qualifications and Credit Framework
- Chapter 3: Registration Framework for Taught Programmes
- Chapter 4: Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes
- Chapter 4: UCL Extenuating Circumstances Form 2020-21
- Chapter 4, Annex 4.3.7: Types of Exam Board
- Chapter 6: Student Casework Framework including Section 10: Student Complaints Procedure 2020-21
- Chapter 8: Academic Partnerships Framework
- Chapter 9: Quality Review Framework
- Chapter 11: Teaching and Learning including the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Regulations 2020-21

87.3. Most of the amendments were relatively minor with the most substantive changes made to the Interruptions of Study policy (see Minutes 85 above). The table in Paper 6-07 (19-20) summarised the changes made to each chapter and indicated where there was prior consideration at EdCom sub-committees. A number of requests for changes had also been submitted later than usual due to the disruption caused by Covid-19. These had been incorporated wherever possible, but had not received prior consideration by a sub-committee. These were highlighted in the paper and EdCom was asked to give the proposed changes particular scrutiny.

87.4. It was noted that the Extenuating Circumstances (EC) form had been updated to reflect new Interruptions regulations and to make the form more accessible. This was recommended for approval following discussion at ARQASC. However, following the EACP recommendation, endorsed by EdCom, to relax the rules on provision of evidence by the student for the EC claim, it was suggested that it might confuse students for the EC form to state that they needed to provide evidence. However, it was further noted that the requirement to provide evidence had been suspended due to the Covid 19 pandemic, partly in order to ease pressure on the NHS by removing the need for students to obtain doctors' notes and other medical evidence. As the rule had only been suspended, it was necessary to retain it within the regulations and hence the EC form.

87.5. A number of faculties reported that there had been a large increase in the number of EC applications since the relaxation of the evidence requirement and this had a large impact on staff workloads. There was an exponential rise in some faculties, with Engineering reporting an increase from 800 prior to the lock-down to 6,500 applications. It was suggested that any proposals to permanently remove the requirement would need to be carefully scrutinised and considered, with staff resources taken into account. It was suggested that the EC policy form part of the review of the mitigation for Covid 19 which would be conducted by the EACP before the start of the next session.

87.6. The rationale for extending the Teaching on Wednesday afternoons policy (Chapter 11: Teaching and Learning) to cover PGT as well as UG students was queried, with some concerns expressed on the difficulty of scheduling teaching through losing this time. It was noted that this proposal had received considerable discussion and support in high level Gold, Silver and Bronze discussions on the pandemic. With much of the student experience occurring online, it was considered more important than ever to set aside time for student extra-curricular activities. The SU were strongly in favour of this as it would send a positive message of inclusivity to PGT students and help to foster a sense of belonging. It was noted that the policy did allow for teaching to take place on Wednesday afternoons should it prove impossible to schedule classes at other times, but this required discussion and agreement with the students concerned and for alternative arrangements put in place for those students who wished to take part in extracurricular activities.

87.7. The suspension of the 70% attendance requirement agreed at the last meeting of EdCom was also queried with a request for guidance on how departments might monitor students and on how it would affect Tier 4 students. It was noted that the regulations regarding Tier 4 had not been suspended and engagement with those students should continue as before. It was noted that the attendance requirement had been particularly useful in some subjects for seminars in helping to monitor students and in identifying those that needed support. Although the 70% requirement had been suspended, it was noted that departments had some leeway in setting the expectations for engagement for their students. It was further noted that Digital Education were in discussions with the Registrar on technical solutions to monitoring students next term through Blackboard Collaborate and LectureCast and that this might help departments to monitor students before "RegisterUCL" the new UCL-wide digital attendance recording system was in place for January 2021.

87.8. Agreed – to approve Paper EDCOM 6-07 (19-20) Changes to the Academic Manual, subject to noting the above EdCom discussion and any subsequent requirement for amendments. The 2020-21 Academic Manual website was due to be published week commencing 3 August 2020.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

88. UCL Qatar Teach-Out Plan

88.1. Received – the paper at EDCOM 6-08 (19-20).

88.2. It was noted that UCL had negotiated a two-month extension to 31th December 2020 to complete its operations in Qatar. The paper provided an update summarising progress of its approved teach-out plan during Term 2 2019-20 and outlined the provision in place to mitigate for the impact of Covid 19.

89. Approval of New Programmes

89.1. Approved – the programmes of study recommended by PMAP at EDCOM 6-09 (19-20).

90. Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

90.1. Approved – the minutes of PMAP held 14 May 2020 at EDCOM 6-10 (19-20).

90.2. Approved – the minutes of PMAP held 11 June 2020 at EDCOM 6-11 (19-20).

91. Suspensions of Regulations

91.1. Approved – the Suspensions of Regulations at EDCOM 6-12 (19-20).

92. Any Other Business

92.1. Academic Communication Centre (ACC) - received a late paper at: EDCOM 6-13 (19-20) from the Head of the UCL ACC. The ACC had been launched in November 2019 to draw together and develop academic communication provision across UCL and address key objectives in UCL's Education Strategy. Members were asked to note the paper and circulate to colleagues as appropriate. A full item on the ACC was planned for one of the spring term meetings of EdCom next session.

92.2. Lecturecast Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) Update – received a late paper at: EDCOM 6-13 (19-20). The Committee was asked to note that Academic Committee (AC) had approved a proposal from the Lecturecast Policy Working Group and supported by the Crises Review and Advisory Group (CRAG) to turn on the Lecturecast ASR feature. This would provide automated transcripts of recorded lectures and was supported by the Provost and approved for funding. All lectures would have the ASR feature turned on, though lecturers would be able to opt out should they wish, through a "no questions asked" mechanism.

92.3. EdCom Approval before the first 2020-21 meeting in October – there was a possibility with the on-going Covid 19 situation that EdCom decisions could be required on the larger items which it oversaw, such as ASER, IQR and EC evidence. If this affected policy and regulations it might not be appropriate to use EdCom Chair's Action to make such decisions.

92.4. Agreed - that if changed circumstances require consideration of such items with potentially large policy, process or regulatory changes, then this should be conducted by circulation of the matters to the EdCom membership for consideration and approval. This should then be reported to the next EdCom meeting.
Action – EdCom Chair and members to note

92.5. Thank you to departing members – the Chair gave the warmest thanks, on behalf of the Committee to the following departing members for their contribution to the Committee:

- Ms Ashley Slanina-Davies (SU Education Officer) and Ms Aatikah Malik (Welfare and International Officer). The chair also congratulated Mr Jim Onyemenam, who will continue as the SU PG Officer for a second year.
- Professor Eva Sorensen, Professor Mike Porter and Dr Sandra Leaton Gray, the elected professorial and non-professorial academic staff members of Academic

Board (AB). AB had elected Professor Jane Holder, Professor Alistair Greig and Dr Bill Sillar for their two year term of service from next session.

- Ms Lizzie Vinton, Secretary to EdCom would stay on the Committee next year as a member with the secretarial duties passed to Mr Rob Traynor.

93. Dates of Next Meeting

93.1. The dates of EdCom meetings for the 2020-21 session are (venues to be confirmed):
- Tuesday 6 October 2020, 10.30am
- Thursday 3 December 2020, 10.30am
- Tuesday 23 February 2021, 10.30am
- Tuesday 27 April 2021, 10.30am
- Thursday 10 June 2021, 10.30am
- Reserved Meeting: Thursday 22 July 2021 10.30am.

Rob Traynor on behalf of Lizzie Vinton
Secretary to EdCom
Academic Regulations Manager
Academic Services
UCL extension 57603, email: l.vinton@ucl.ac.uk

27 August 2020