



## **Education Committee Special Meeting: Temporary Operating Model**

**30 October 2020**

### **CONFIRMED Minutes**

Present:

Professor Anthony Smith (Chair)

Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Simon Banks; Professor Clare Brooks; Professor Nora Colton; Ms Yasmeen Daoud; Dr Julie Evans; Dr Jo Fraser-Pearce; Professor Deborah Gill; Professor Alistair Greig; Professor Arne Hofmann; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Dr Helen Matthews; Mr Jim Onyemenam; Mr Derfel Owen; Professor Norbert Pachler; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mr Mike Rowson; Dr Bill Sillar; Professor Sam Smidt; Dr Hazel Smith; Dr Fiona Strawbridge; Professor Olga Thomas and Ms Lizzie Vinton.

In attendance: Professor Geraint Rees for Item 2 and Mr Rob Traynor (Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from: Mr Ian David; Mr Ashley Doolan; Ms Megan Gerrie; Ms June Hedges and Professor Jane Holder.

### **Part I: Preliminary Business**

#### **1. Welcome, Apologies and Announcements**

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed the EdCom members and Professor Rees to the Special Meeting, convened to discuss the Temporary Operating Model. The meeting was quorate.

### **Part II: Matter for Discussion**

#### **2. Temporary Operating Model**

- 2.1. Received - Paper 1 Special Meeting (2020-21) the Temporary Operating Model (TOM) presented by the UCL Pro-Vice-Provost (Artificial Intelligence) and Dean of the UCL Faculty of Life Sciences. EdCom was asked to consider the TOM and recommend for approval to Academic Committee (AC) at its special meeting on 3 November. The paper was previously considered and endorsed by the Academic Planning Group (APG), the Education and Operations Delivery Group (EODG) and the Senior Management Team (SMT).

2.2. The paper set out a number of recommendations to enable UCL to continue with its response to the COVID 19 pandemic in Terms 2 and 3. This was against a background of increasing infections nationally and uncertain future environment. Recommendations therefore needed to remain flexible to enable decisions, for example, to either increase or decrease Face to Face teaching, but were nonetheless required to provide some certainty for staff, students and partners. Once formally approved by AC, full communications to staff and students would be conducted with Communications and Marketing (CAM).

2.3. The key recommendations for EdCom to consider were as follows:

- Recommendations 1 and 2 – to warmly welcome returning students choosing to return to UCL after the Christmas closure and to confirm that online teaching and Face to Face activity (1-2 hours each week) would continue where safe and feasible, with alternative remote provision where not. This will enable flexibility to deal with increased or decreased COVID 19 rates.
- Recommendation 3 – to monitor Face to Face teaching take up from Term 1 and assess whether changes to teaching and learning spaces were required. Consideration will also be given to providing more space for Students' Union (SU) activities.
- Recommendation 4 – to continue to closely review student visa route (formerly Tier 4) implications and to deliver distance learning, but plan to move to Face to Face teaching where circumstances allowed.
- Recommendation 5 – timetabling for Terms 2 and 3 to be completed on the same devolved basis as for Term 1.
- Recommendation 6 – confirmation that no Face to Face invigilated examinations to take place in 2020-21, though the feasibility for some time-limited examinations for some subjects (e.g. Mathematics) will be considered.
- Recommendations 7, 8 and 9 – continuing the TOM into Terms 2 and 3 will affect any practical classes, projects or other activities that were deferred from Term 1 in the hope of delivering more Face to Face activity later. These will need to be reviewed and alternative provision given where needed. Field work can be provided where it has been approved and risk assessed. Student laboratory or practice-based projects that are an essential part of the curriculum will continue on campus, but where this is not deemed essential or cannot be accommodated, suitable online projects should be offered instead. The EODG will be able to provide support to departments on this.
- Recommendations 10-16 – these sit largely outside EdCom's educational remit and concern safety procedures, the Christmas closure, continuing antigen testing, transition planning and plans for research and innovation. The TOM again allows for flexibility in decision making for the uncertainties of the pandemic.
- Recommendation 17 – the Provost's Leadership Forum will solicit feedback on the TOM implementation and lessons learned. This will help consolidate the expertise gained and inform improvements to future provision, though it will not slow down delivery of the TOM recommendations.

2.4. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) Clarification of the TOM time-frame (in Recommendation 6) – it was noted that this referred to “2021” and was queried whether this meant the calendar year - for instance whether it would cover assessments for November 2021. It was clarified that the recommendation and the wider TOM referred to the 2020-21 Annual Year only.  
Agreed – to amend the paper to clarify that Recommendation 6 covers the 2020-21 session.
- b) Fieldwork – some concerns were expressed on what support would be provided to departments to safely run field trips and related activities. The ARQASC Chair reported that an EODG sub-group was developing advice and guidance on field work which would shortly be published.
- c) Laboratory work and practice based projects - significant investment in software for virtual laboratories had been made to provide online alternatives where it was not possible for students to attend campus. However, careful consideration would be required for those programmes (e.g. some in the Faculty of Medical Sciences), where assessment required students’ physical presence. This would need to be thought through operationally with the departments concerned.
- d) Accreditation bodies and learning societies – concerns were noted that should laboratory or other practice based work not prove possible, some accrediting bodies, such as the Royal Society of Chemistry, could refuse to accredit programmes as key learning objectives were not met. It was suggested that careful management of programmes would be required to ensure student awareness that teaching could require changes or that they may need to move modules in order to complete. Departments should also engage in dialogue with the learning societies to inform them of the problems arising from COVID 19 and to seek to persuade them to adopt a flexible approach. Involving other institutions with similar concerns in such discussions might also prove fruitful.
- e) The Pro-Vice-Provost (Student Experience) informed EdCom that feedback from faculties indicated that most departments were able to provide two hours per week face to face teaching, but where this was not safe or feasible, had provided alternative remote teaching, in discussion with their students.
- f) Clarification of Terminology – clarity was requested on whether essential Face to Face activity included both educational activity necessary to meet learning objectives as well as enrichment activity. This could cause confusion for staff in terms of planning and managing activity. It was noted that in the new TOM, two bullet points were now used to distinguish “group activity” referring to additional activity designed to add value to core teaching (such as Careers and SU activities) and “Educational activity”, outlined in the second bullet, referred to studio-based learning, laboratory sessions, seminars, tutorials, etc, that would be core learning activities necessary to meet learning objectives. It was not possible to further clarify as the particular definition of essential activity would depend on the particular programme which varied

substantially across UCL departments and disciplines. Faculties and departments would need to consider where core teaching and additional activity lay when considering the operational management of their teaching.

- 2.5. Agreed – that EdCom endorses the TOM, subject to the minor change ensuring that it consistently refers to the 2020-21 session through-out (i.e. not to the 2021 calendar year) and recommends that Academic Committee formally approves the TOM and its recommendations at its meeting on 3 November 2020.

Action: EdCom members to note

Rob Traynor  
Secretary to EdCom

Policy Adviser (Education Governance)  
Academic Services [telephone 0203 108 8213, UCL extension 582123, email:  
[r.traynor@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:r.traynor@ucl.ac.uk)]

30 October 2020