



## Operations Committee

Thursday 26 January 2023, 10:00 – 11:20am

### Minutes

#### Present Members:

Andy Smith (Chair); Suzy Adcock; Dr Paul Ayris, Jeremy Barraud; Georgina Cade; Sara Collins; Natalie Conway; Sarah Cowls; Ian Dancy; Geoff Dunk; Helen Fisher; Clare Foyle; Claire Glen; Katy Hamilton; Richard Jackson; Tansy Jones; Sarah Lawson; Natasha Lewis; Sian Lunt; Alice Mortlock; Kate Pearce; Julie Smith; Dr Kathryn Walsh; Donna Williamson

#### Apologies:

Deniz Akinci  
Beth Beasant  
Mike Brown  
Donna Dalrymple  
Ian Galloway  
Ciaran Moynihan  
Becky Whitham

#### In attendance:

For Minute 26: Sarah West, Deputy Registrar

#### Officer:

Louise Moore, Secretary

### Part I: Preliminary Business

#### 23. Minutes (Paper 3-15)

23.1. Operations Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022.

#### 24. Matters Arising (Paper 3-16)

24.1. Arising from minute 14.1, Timetabling, Space Use and Cost of Space: Sian Minett, Director of Timetabling (Service Delivery and Improvement), to collect and share the data on unused booked space with Heads of Departments, Deans and DOOs, plus UMC and Operations Committee.

**Closed:** Members noted that the issue of unused booked space would be considered when timetabling was taken forward for 23/24.

24.2. Arising from minute 14.2. Tackling UCL’s Carbon Footprint: Joanna Marshall-Cook, Head of Sustainability Programmes to:

- i. provide details of what colleagues could start doing now to reduce UCL’s carbon footprint.
- ii. share the data and savings of weekend and evening building closures.

**Completed:** Richard Jackson, Sustainability Director, addressed under the Net Zero Strategic Case agenda item, minute 27.

24.3. Arising from minute 14.5. Start of academic year: lessons learnt: a paper with the lessons learnt from this year and preparations for next year would go to UMC and Operations Committee.

**Completed:** Sarah Cowls, Executive Director of Student Services and Registrar, and Sarah West, Deputy Registrar, presented paper 3-17, ‘Update and Next Steps for Student Welcome and Induction’, minute 26.

24.4. Arising from minute 18.3c. Cubane Cost and Capacity Benchmarking Results: Beth Beasant, Interim Executive Director, Faculty Operations, to work with the Directors of Operations, Helen Sawyer, Strategic Projects Manager, Derfel Owen, Director of Change and Improvement and Kate Pearce, Director of Finance Business Partnering on Faculty benchmarking information.

**Completed:** Directors of Operations had received the Cubane Faculty benchmarking information and were clear about how to access further analysis or information if needed. Directors of Operations had attended one of the Cubane data sessions with functional leads.

24.5. Arising from minute 20.2e. Critical Incident Response Plan and Business Continuity Management Steering Group Terms of Reference: Ian Dancy, Executive Director of Operations, to feedback to Veronique Mizgailo, Head of Business Continuity, to implement the suggested amendments to the Critical Incident Response Plan and the Business Continuity Management Steering Group.

**Completed.**

## Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

### 25. Operations Committee update

25.1. Ian Dancy, Executive Director of Operations, delivered a verbal update on five areas of challenge for UCL:

- a. Heating was proving challenging across the UCL estate. Measures were in place, with a team dedicated to resolving the issues. Colleagues were

thanked for their patience and were asked to log all issues with the helpdesk.

- b. One Pool Street continued to challenge and due to heating issues, the student residents had received a reduction in their rental fees.
- c. Security strikes were scheduled and a lessons learnt exercise was underway to learn from previous occasions.
- d. A review of small works had commenced to understand the value for money of the work done by Estates and to respond to feedback.
- e. It was importance to reset and raise the bar on standards for UCL spaces, to ensure that the space was fit for use. Operations Committee members were asked to assess the UCL estate with fresh eyes and to inform Ian Dancy where standards were not being met.

25.2. Questions and comments were welcomed, and the following points were raised:

- a. Noted that comments had been raised on social media amongst the academic community about UCL not taking a lead in the ventilation of its spaces. A response was being prepared and it was noted that UCL continued to work on ventilation and money was specifically assigned to improve ventilation.
- b. An issue about evacuation plans for colleagues unable to use the stairs was raised. It was noted that individuals should have an evacuation plan. The issue of external visitors would be picked up outside the meeting.

25.3. Andy Smith, Interim Vice-President (Operations) and Chair highlighted the following topical issues:

- a. The planned industrial action of 18 days of national strike action between 1 February and 22 March 2023 and 'action short of strike' (ASoS) was noted. After the Academic Leadership Group meeting, more data on what UCL was doing centrally would be provided. Communications would be circulated shortly and would feature a roundup of the general strike action, communications for both staff and students with the 18 strike dates, and a FAQ page on the website. Colleagues were encouraged to reach out to Georgie Cade, Head of Communications Strategy & Planning, with any issues.
  - i. Noted that a UCL-wide position on staff with school aged children effected by the strikes would be welcomed.
  - ii. Noted that 18 days of strike action over two months would have a significant impact for everyone.
- b. The impact of the Microsoft widespread outage on 25 January did impact upon UCL with Teams going down for a short time. WhatsApp was used as an alternative and should be considered for any future occurrences.
- c. Noted that it was the job of Operations Committee, whilst supporting cost savings and the work of the Financial Planning & Performance Committee (FPPC), to look at operational performance and service. Noted that

operational items should be brought to Operations Committee and then to University Management Committee (UMC) as necessary.

**26. Student Welcome & Induction (Paper 3-17)**

- 26.1. Sarah West, Deputy Registrar, presented the paper on student welcome and induction, highlighting the updates and improvements upon last year and the key developments for next year. She raised the following points:
- a. Since the presentation at Operations Committee a year ago the following initiatives had been established:
    - i. Permanent funding for a Student Welcome and Induction Team.
    - ii. A budget assigned to student welcome and induction to cover temporary staffing, marquee hire, online sessions, signage, and banners.
    - iii. Faculty Delivery Group set up to coordinate communications, share best practice, and support for new students to make the induction experience seamless.
  - b. 92% student satisfaction was received last year, and the team were working through the feedback to improve upon certain areas and repeat what worked well. For example, the sessions by students for students worked extremely well and were positively received and these would be repeated next time. Overall, more would be made of student ambassadors.
  - c. Areas under development for next year and for future years included:
    - i. Volume of emails - this remained a problem and teams were working to address the issues and to better coordinate communications.
    - ii. Website – improvements were being made.
    - iii. Administrative hurdles for students – noted that our international students were particularly affected, and administrative tasks in general needed to be simplified. Noted that work was underway on the issues.
    - iv. Student ID cards – work was underway to improve the experience.
    - v. UCL student induction – further work was being undertaken to better embed the induction within academic departments.
- 26.2. The report and work of the team was commended, and the following points were raised in discussion:
- a. Suggested that a succinct message in the Leadership Briefing would be helpful to give senior leaders at UCL an opportunity to focus on the work undertaken on student welcome and induction. The message about better embedding the induction within academic departments could then be driven down within Faculties. This suggestion was welcomed and colleagues from the Student Welcome & Induction Team also offered to come to Faculties and speak to the teams.
  - b. The roll of the student programme handbook to promote and reference resources was raised. Noted that the handbook was currently being refreshed and the teams were working together to make revisions.

- c. The opportunity to work with the Estates Strategy on welcome and induction spaces was raised, and would be followed up with Ian Dancy, Executive Director of Operations.
- d. Issues were raised around the Doctoral School induction, with reference to PGT and PGR students, and the importance of unpicking the difference between the two groups. It was noted that work with Doctoral School colleagues was already underway, looking at improving the experience for both full-time and part-time students.
- e. The impact of the visa process upon our international students, and whether this left them feeling more vulnerable and negatively affected their experience in the UK was raised. Noted that this had been identified as a serious issue and although the Government policy was out of our control, plans were in place to ensure our international students felt welcomed.
- f. A longer-term issue for UCL was the use of the Wilkins Building for welcome activity. The space was already very tight, but there were currently no other space options.

26.3. Operations Committee:

- a. Noted the report and were very encouraged by the advances made by the team and fully supported the developments in train to improve the welcome and induction experience further.

**27. Net Zero Strategic Case (Paper 3-18)**

27.1. Richard Jackson, Sustainability Director, introduced the paper and explained how Operations Committee could help with the moving the strategy to implementation stage. The paper would be presented to FPPC on 28 March and UMC in April and input from today's meeting would help refine the document. As well as aligning closely with the Financial and Estates strategies, the view of Operations Committee on these four areas was sought:

- a. **Scope:** noted that carbon footprint covered:
  - i. Energy
  - ii. Organisational travel
  - iii. Water and waste
  - iv. Goods
  - v. Student travel at the start and end of term
  - vi. Investments

UCL's net zero plan focused on energy, organisational travel and water and waste, but what action should be taken against the other areas?
- b. **Preferred pathway:** which option should we choose:
  - i. 1 – if we continued what we were doing, where would we get to?
  - ii. 2a – if we aligned to the current financial strategy, where would this take us?
  - iii. 2b – if we built upon 2a and took advantage of external funding, what else could be achieved?
  - iv. 3 – if we used a lot of resource, where would this take us?

- c. **Off-setting:** the controversy surrounding off-setting was noted, but how comfortable would colleagues be about a pragmatic approach to off-setting?
  - d. **Delivery:** successful delivery would not be easy and extensive work was needed to embed sustainability into existing work and resources. The roll of the Sustainability Team would be as advocates, to support with technological input and provide help to establish carbon management plans. A governance structure, linked to the grand challenge for climate crisis, would help to embed and provide accountability.
- 27.2. The following points were raised in discussion around scope, pathway and off-setting:
- a. Noted that the recommendation in the paper was pathway 2b, with the fallback position of pathway 2a if necessary. Some members considered that pathway 3 should be the aim, with pathways 2b and 2a as fallbacks.
  - b. Discussion around off-setting presented a variety of views, with the following points noted:
    - i. Although off-setting was better than nothing, it should not be relied upon and was a second-best option.
    - ii. Off-setting was not recommended from a financial perspective.
    - iii. If off-setting was to be used, then a list of appropriate options for UCL to use should be clearly laid out.
  - c. The challenges were recognised and noted that it was important to set targets in planning rounds.
  - d. Wording around student travel should be carefully considered. Suggested that caution should be used when discussing student travel. Noted that 54% of UCL students were international.
  - e. Noted that the indicative figures quoted in the paper on capital needed to be explored further with finance colleagues. The importance of embedding sustainability within existing projects was raised. It was suggested that the paper would benefit from further teasing out and explaining the benefits, to promote the message of sustainability ambition with a financial benefit.
  - f. Noted that the Estates Strategy was building in sustainability as an underlying principle, with the aim to improve the campus and improve sustainability at the same time. The need to drive harder to reduce emissions was raised.
  - g. Research and Innovation Services had noted a significant increase in interest from funders about sustainability, and accurate reporting of data was important for grant funding. As regulation and reporting increased it was important for UCL to respond and to be a leader in the field.
  - h. Support from Strategic Planning was offered to help with the monitoring of targets and outcomes using KPIs. The strategic planning cycle would form a significant part of the monitoring process, supporting the governance structure and tracking outcomes.

- 27.3. The following points were raised in discussion around delivery:
- a. Important to deliver the changes as part of the UCL community choosing to do the right thing from a sustainability perspective. Noted that there would need to be a culture change and that academic leadership was essential from an operational perspective. It was important to engage an academic lead and to use them internally. It was also important to define what people would be accountable for.
  - b. The importance of working with our students was raised as not all students put sustainability issues first and more engagement work was needed.
  - c. Successful delivery was a leadership issue across all our areas of business and sustainability should be a standard item on all our committees.
  - d. Noted that a set of actions for Faculties were being developed around delivering reductions, creating sustainability champions and reviewing activity through estates steering boards. Noted that Richard Jackson, Sustainability Director would attend a future DOO meeting to discuss further.
  - e. Suggested that a leader for each area would determine what they would deliver, making a clear commitment to the Sustainability Team. There would be clear actions with targets and guidelines.
  - f. Noted that the template for the strategic plan was still at the planning stage and that sustainability would be added as a key question. Clare Foyle, Planning Manager would add, in consultation with Richard Jackson, Sustainability Director.
  - g. The opportunity to add a set of sustainability principles to the student offer letters and prospectus materials, would be helpful to engage students before their arrival at UCL.
- 27.4. Operations Committee:
- a. Noted that Richard Jackson, Sustainability Director, would hold follow up with meetings with colleagues in Estates, ISD and with the DOOs.
  - b. Noted that the Operations Committee discussion would be reflected in the document going forwards, when presented to FPPC at the end of March and UMC in early April.
  - c. **ACTION:** Richard Jackson, Sustainability Director, to provide an update on the progress of the Net Zero Strategic Case at a future meeting.

### **Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information**

#### **28. AOB**

28.1. None raised.

#### **29. Date of the next meeting**

## Operations Committee Minutes – 26 January 2023

29.1. Thursday 16 March 2023, 10:30 – 12:20

Louise Moore  
January 2023