LONDON'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS AND FUNDING COMMITTEE

4 December 2017

M I N U T E S

PRESENT:
Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)
Ms Wendy Appleby, Mr Simon Banks, Mr Ian Bartlett, Professor David Bogle, Professor Stella Bruzzi, Professor Mark Emberton, Dr Julie Evans, Mr Neil Green, Ms Lesley Hayman, Mr Kevin King, Ms Collette Lux, Ms Bella Malins, Dr Michael Munday, Ms Katy Redfern, Mr Tom Rowson, Dr David Sim, Dr David Stevens and Ms Olga Thomas

In attendance: Mr Rob Traynor (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms Sarah Al-Aride, Ms Cathy Brown, Mr Mark Crawford, Dr Elinor Jones, Dr Katie Quy, Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker and Professor Norbert Pachler

Key to abbreviations:	
AC	Academic Committee
BEAMS	School of Built Environment, Engineering and Mathematical and Physical Sciences
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CAM	Communications and Marketing
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
IOE	Institute of Education
PGT	Postgraduate Taught
PGR	Postgraduate Research
SRM	Student Recruitment Marketing
StRAFC	Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee
TOPS	Transforming our Professional Services
UG	Undergraduate

1   **CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE 2017-18**
     [PAPER 1-01]

1.1   ***Approved*** – the constitution, membership and terms of reference of StRAFC.

1.2   The Chair welcomed the following new members to the Committee:

- Ms Sarah Al-Aride, Education Officer, the Students' Union
- Dr Simon Banks, Faculty Tutor Engineering (BEAMS representative)
- Dr Katie Quy, Admissions Tutor, Institute of Education

2   MINUTES OF 27 JUNE 2017 MEETING
[StRAFC Minutes 23-34, 2016-17].

2.1   ***Approved*** – the Minutes of the StRAFC meeting held on 27 June 2017, subject to the correction of a minor error.

3   MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3A   Transforming our Professional Services (TOPS): Communities of Practice (Student Recruitment)
(Minute 30, 25.06.2017)

3A.1   The Director of SRM provided an update on the TOPS community of practice:

a) Following the Student Recruitment Community of Practice June launch event, a number of projects and events had been initiated ,including:
   - An event on the implications of Brexit for student recruitment.
   - A project digitally mapping student recruitment activities and event data, which was due to report in January.
   - A campus tour project to coordinate faculty tours with general campus tours delivered by SRM, including the development of a virtual tour to be piloted with the Faculty of Laws.
   - A CRM e-mails to students process fix which reduced the number of steps involved from 40 to 12.
   - A project to identify best practice and provide guidelines for measuring return of investment in digital advertising for student recruitment activities.
b) The Community of Practice also operated as an on-line group and held virtual meetings as well as events to bring people together and share best practice.
c) An event by a leading media agency (ZenithOptimedia) on cutting edge online and digital advertising was to be held on 11 December at the Institute of Education and any interested UCL staff and students were welcome to attend. The Secretary circulated details of the event after the StRAFC meeting.

3A.2   StRAFC will be kept informed of the progress of the Student Recruitment community of practice and its projects and events.

3B   Competitions and Marketing Authority Action Plan
(Minute 31, 25.06.2017)

3B.1   The Director of Access and Admissions reported that the Consumer Legislation Compliance Steering Group had now been set up, with an Operation Group reporting to it, to oversee UCL's compliance with CMA legislation and to identify areas of risk. This included module information, major/minor changes to programme and modules and UG terms and conditions.

3B.2   The Steering Group will report to Academic Committee and both it and the operations group were looking for members. Interested StRAFC members were asked to contact the Director of Access and Admissions.

4   ADMISSIONS UPDATE
(PAPER 1-02)

4.1   ***Received*** – a summary of the 2017 admissions cycle by the Director of Access and Admissions, who reported:

a)   UG applications had increased by 5% overall with offer targets increased to address previous declines in offer to acceptance conversion rates. The 7% increase in offers of admission led to an increase in acceptances (7%). There were concerns with EU acceptances (-3%) although UK (+3%) and Overseas (+14%) increased.

b)   Year 1 enrolment against offer targets showed that faculties generally missed UK targets but over-performed in EU and Overseas. Factors affecting enrolment predictions included the declining 18 year-old demographic and student debt for UK, whilst uncertainties on Brexit and declining EU application numbers affected that student group. There had been an overshoot overall of 250 students on the offer targets, centred in four departments. Future targets would be based on three years' worth of previous data rather than the one year they were based on last time.

c)   PGT applications, offers and acceptances all increased, despite some concerns in mid-cycle. Acceptances rose by 12%, though action was required to mitigate against a decline in EU applications.

d)   The IOE had not been able to meet its offer targets due to much lower numbers than expected coming through the Teach First route on teacher training. UK PGT enrolments overall also did not meet the target, with EU and Overseas numbers compensating. UCL was currently 400 short of the overall target, but expected 200 additional enrolments in January.

e)   PGR applications had decreased by 7% affected by decreases in Engineering and Life Sciences. More offers (+14%) were made to compensate and this led to a 9% increase in acceptances. EU applications declined (18%) and with more offers made, acceptances still fell (-8%). MRes applications followed a similar pattern with lower applications (-18%), though offers (+8%) and acceptances (+18%) rose.

f)   EU affiliate applications (-7%) and acceptances (-10%) also declined though there was better news for Overseas numbers with a reversal of the trend in recent years for declining numbers. Applications (+9%), offers (+12%) and acceptances (+12%) all increased.

4.2   The following points were noted in the discussion:

a)   There was a concern that EU enrolment numbers were down for all levels of study.

b)   Faculty Tutors reported that the more nuanced data on applications they received was very helpful in deciding offer targets and informing programme directors during the session. The data on fee status provided helped them to get closer to the targets.

4.3   The Director of Access and Admissions also gave the members a demonstration of the UCL Data and Insight Project webpages for admissions

data. The project was undertaking work to improve the quality and usability of the UCL management information at institutional, faculty and departmental level, combining different data sources and making it available to staff. UG admissions data was available now, with PGT data likely to be ready next term. The UCL Data and Insight Team Director (Peter Jones) and Manager (Martin Howells) were happy to share the web-page and further discuss faculty and departmental needs. The Director of SRM also noted that overseas applicant data was available monthly from his office if colleagues wished to see this at country level.

RESOLVED:

4.4   ***Approved***: Paper 1-02, the Update on the Admissions Cycle.

5   ADMISSIONS SELECTION PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES
(PAPER 1-03)

5.1   ***Received*** – a paper from the Director of Access and Admissions, outlining the work being carried out to improve the efficiencies and effectiveness of UCL's admissions service, with suggestions for policy changes in the areas of turnaround times and references for StRAFC the Committee to consider. This included:

a) *Referral times* – it was proposed that a time limit is introduced for departments returning a recommendation to Admissions. For UG and PGT programmes, this would be two calendar weeks in cases where no further selection tool was being used by the department. If the decision was still not returned following a reminder, after a further week Admissions would then retrieve the application and make the decision.

b) *References for PGT Applications* – two references are currently required for PGT applications which are not considered until both have been received. Feedback has indicated that not all departments require two references and many requests are received to consider applications with less than two, whilst some departments do not use them in their own selection processes. It was proposed that one reference should become the new default setting for PGT applications, with departments also able to opt for none, one or two.

c) *Deposits on offer acceptances for PGT applications* – 69 programmes are participating in the deposit scheme this year and analysis is underway on whether this had an impact on conversion rates from offer to acceptance and acceptance to enrolment, which will be made available to StRAFC once completed. There had been varied feedback from faculties on the scheme so far, current options are £2,000 or £4,000 for full-time programmes (some considering the latter rate too high). It was proposed to introduce an additional £1000 deposit band (£500 for part-time study) to encourage greater take up of the scheme.

5.2   The following points were noted in the discussion:

a) The proposal to tighten referral times was seen as good in principle, though it would be important to ensure that Heads of Department and

Admissions Tutors were fully informed so that they would understand the implications for the new rules.

b) There was general agreement with the proposal for one reference for PGT applications, though it was noted that departments should retain flexibility to choose, as some required two references (e.g. a clinical and academic reference was necessary for many SLMS programmes). It was noted that overtly negative references were rare and that where they were received, a second reference would be sought to ensure a balanced view for the application.

c) Members agreed with the proposal to introduce a lower deposit band (£1,000 for full-time programmes and £500 for part-time).

RESOLVED:

5.3 **Approved**: Paper 1-03 and the three proposals to change referral times, PGT references and PGT deposits on offers of admission.

Action: Bella Malins to note

6   UCL SCHOLARSHIPS AND STUDENT FUNDING STRATEGY
(PAPER 1-04)

6.1 **Received** – Paper 1-04 introduced by the Head of Student Funding who reported the following:

a) The Scholarships and Student Funding Strategy Group had met a number of times and presented a draft strategy for a five year plan from 2018-23.

b) The key objectives were to help UCL:

i) Recruit high quality students from diverse backgrounds with separate initiatives aimed at UK and international students. This includes strengthening support for widening participation activity (enhanced bursaries for UG students recruited through the Access UCL scheme and PGT students and full PGR scholarships for BME students) as well as developing regional engagement programmes such as scholarships for African students;

ii) Enhance the UCL Scholarships programme to build a community of UCL Scholars;

iii) Develop programmes of engagement to improve the quality and access to student funding advice and provision;

iv) Improve coordination and evaluation of student funding activities with the intention of simplifying the currently complex offer with fewer schemes and more fully funded awards to be made available. This will enable better evaluation of the schemes and help decision making on the most effective schemes to support.

c) The strategy recognised a number of key challenges facing UCL including increased competition for students, Brexit, cost of study and the London factor.

d) The draft strategy was intended to align with the UCL strategies, such as UCL 2034, the Education Strategy and Global Engagement. The bursary

and scholarship proposals were also drawn up in relation to the Access Agreement.

6.2   The following points were noted in the discussion:

a) There was general support for the proposals around the UCL Scholars awards and a further suggestion that they might be linked to student academic representation programme.

b) It was further suggested that the strategy consider contingency planning for groups of students in unforeseen financial difficulties, for example where major events such as wars or economic crashes had affected certain countries. UCL-wide planning and risk management may prevent financial problems with such students from falling on individual faculties and departments.

c) It was queried why the draft strategy suggested targeting scholarships at Africa and noted that student numbers from there had declined recently and there was also interest from donors in focussing on that area. It was suggested that the strategy should also consider how to help students from other low GDP countries outside of that continent.

d) A move to a less complex scholarship and bursary offer would improve the information available in the prospectus and should enable students to understand more easily the support on offer. The enhanced use of SITS/Portico should also enable the SFO to make use of existing data to streamline the application and decision making processes.

e) It was queried whether the Group might give some thought to the process for tuition fee partnership scholarships. The current process was for departments to be charged by Student Fees before the faculty is reimbursed, but this affected departments' contribution targets and it was suggested to simplify this by waiving the fee instead. It was noted that input from colleagues in the Finance Division would be required to ascertain the accounting requirements for recording these types of transactions. If fee waivers were acceptable the criteria for applying them would need to be transparent and clearly recorded.

RESOLVED:

6.3   That the Scholarships and Student Funding Strategy Group further refine the draft strategy taking into consideration the StRAFC discussion. It was agreed that once done, Chair's action may be taken to approve the document
Action: Kevin King and StRAFC members to note

7   STUDENT RECRUITMENT MARKETING STRATEGIES

7.1   ***Received*** – Paper 1-05 (a-d) introduced by the Director of SRM. Paper 1-05 included strategic planning documents as follows:

-   UK Student Recruitment/On campus (1-05A)
-   International Student Recruitment (1-05B)
-   MarComms Student Recruitment (1-05C)

- Development Projects List (1-05D)

7.2 The Director of SRM noted that the strategic plans had been developed following wide consultation in UCL and reported the following:

a) The strategies were unified by overarching themes and responses to the current recruitment context, with the key challenges laid out.
b) Adopting more coherent approaches would improve efficiency and enable reductions on costs. For example, UCL was the biggest customer for some of the advertising agencies and it might be possible to reduce costs by adopting unified practices in using them.
c) The strategies proposed much closer relationships between SRM and faculties which would assist student number planning and in supporting less selective subjects, some of which were facing declines in applications.
d) The key objectives were to make UCL second only to Oxbridge in attracting the most able students, enhancing the diversity of the student body and ensuring an excellent applicant experience from enquiry to enrolment. A large number of projects to enable these objectives was already in development and outlined in Paper 1-05D.

7.3 The following points were noted in the discussion:

a) It was very important to improve student number planning and to encourage more joined up thinking in doing this. The Planning Office were now looking at the previous three years' worth of data and would be providing SRM and faculties with this, via the Data and Insight team. It was suggested that recruitment discussions might also take place at school level and within clusters of similar programmes in different faculties (e.g. programmes with politics content).
b) Greater use of the data would also enable mapping of programme performance with recruitment, identifying areas to protect and considering best use of resources. A review of business processes might also enable CAM to provide advice and assistance in improving conversion rates from offers to admissions. It was suggested that the TOPS Student Recruitment community of practice would be a good forum to explore these areas.

RESOLVED:

7.4 That the CAM and SRM officers continue to keep StRAFC updated on the progress of the student recruitment strategies.

Action: Collette Lux and David Stevens to note

8 FUTURE StRAFC ITEMS

8.1 The following items were suggested for discussion by StRAFC in 2017-18 (all items for approval and confirmation by the Chair):

- Widening Participation Data
- Evaluation of the PGT Student Loan Scheme
- Student Progression including BME students (i.e UG-PGT-PGR), general progression from UG to PGT and use of Open Days to target UCL UG students

9   StRAFC ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17 TO ACADEMIC COMMITTEE
(PAPER 1-06)

9.1   ***Approved*** – the StRAFC Annual Report 2016-17, to be submitted to AC.

10   REPORTS OF SUB-GROUPS, WORKING GROUPS ETC OF STRAFC

10.1   ***Received –*** The following minutes were received from StRAFC sub-groups and working groups since the previous meeting[1]:

- Admissions Requirement Panel – 17 September 2017

11   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1   Members were reminded of the forthcoming PGT Open Day which was scheduled for Wednesday 6th December 2017, 2-7pm.

12   DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

12.1   The dates for the next StRAFC meetings are as follows:

- Monday 5 March 2018 (11am Room G08, Chadwick Building)
- Monday 11 June 2018 (11am Room 432, 16 Taviton Street – SSEES Building)

Rob Traynor
StRAFC Secretary

Policy Advisor (Education Governance)
Academic Services (Student and Registry Services)
[telephone: 0203 108 8213 internal extension: 58213 email: r.traynor@ucl.ac.uk]

9 January 2018

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[1] Minutes of StRAFC sub-groups etc are available, along with the other StRAFC papers, on the StRAFC SharePoint.