STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS AND FUNDING COMMITTEE

6 June 2016

M I N U T E S

PRESENT:

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Ms Wendy Appleby, Mr Ian Bartlett, Professor David Bogle, Dr Caroline Essex, Dr Julie Evans, Ms Lesley Hayman, Dr Russell Hitchings, Mr Kevin King, Ms Bella Malins, Ms Michelle Moore, Dr Michael Munday, Ms Suguna Nair, Professor Norbert Pachler, Dr Yvo Pokern, Ms Katy Redfern, Mr Tom Rowson, Dr David Stevens, Ms Olga Thomas, Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker, Ms Wahida Samie and Professor Jo Wolff

In attendance: Mr John Burnett, Ms Rachel Wilde (for Professor Claire Maxwell) and Mr Rob Traynor (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Mark Emberton, Dr Russell Hitchings, Dr Claire Maxwell and Mr Mark Sudbury

Key to abbreviations:	
CONACyT	National Council for Science and Technology (Mexico)
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DARO	Development and Alumni Relations Office
EAP	Elite Athlete Programme (UCLU)
GEO	Global Engagement Office
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IOE	Institute of Education
PGT	Postgraduate Taught
PGR	Postgraduate Research
SFO	Student Funding Office
SITS	Systems in Tuition (student records system)
SLMS	School of Life and Medical Sciences
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOPG	Scholarships Officers Planning Group
SRM	Student Recruitment Marketing
StRAFC	Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee
UCLU	UCL Union
UG	Undergraduate

27   CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE 2015-16

27.1   The Chair noted that Ms Lesley Hayman, Head of Global Partnerships, would be the permanent representative for the Global Engagement Office and welcomed her to full membership of the Committee.

27.2   The Chair also thanked Mr David Ashton, the Director of Student Administration, who had recently left UCL to serve as Registrar at Imperial College, for his contribution to the Committee.

28   MINUTES OF 7 MARCH 2016 MEETING

28.1   ***Approved*** – the Minutes of the StRAFC meeting held on 7 March 2016 *[StRAFC Minutes 16-26, 2015-16]* subject to a minor change at *Minute 18.1 (d)* which had suggested that CONACyT was the only partnership agreement at UCL which involved a fee discount. This was not the case and the minutes were amended to reflect the true position.

29   MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

29A   CONACyT Scholarship Agreement and Diversification of Recruitment Markets
(StRAFC Minute 18, 07.03.16)

29A.1   UCL had been in discussions with CONACyT (Mexico's Council for promoting science and technology) regarding renewal of its partnership agreement. CONACyT had stated that it would only renew the agreement should the fee discount offered by UCL be increased to 30%, from 25% in the previous agreement. StRAFC had agreed to support the Vice-Provost (International) working group proposal that the GEO negotiate with CONACyT with a position of accepting a 30% fee discount for PGR students, whilst retaining the 25% reduction for PGT students.

29A.2   The Head of Global Partnerships (GEO) reported that following further discussion, CONACyT had refused to compromise and insisted that the fee discount for both PGT and PGR students should be 30%. It would also not accept a deal for PGR students only with a 30% fee discount.

29A.3   The GEO had consulted UCL faculties on whether they would be willing to accept a new agreement with CONACyT for a 30% discount for both PGT and PGR students. Seven faculties had agreed and three disagreed, with one faculty left to decide. GEO Officers intended to respond to CONACyT soon with the final decision.

RESOLVED:

29A.4   That the Head of Global Partnerships inform StRAFC of the outcome of the discussions with CONACyT[1].

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[1] Following the StRAFC meeting and after consultation with UCL Faculties, the GEO confirmed that they had agreed terms with CONACyT as follows:
-   UCL will provide a 30% fee discount for postgraduate research students across all faculties.
-   UCL will also provide a 30% fee discount for postgraduate taught students in the following faculties: Arts and Humanities; Bartlett Faculty of Built Environment; Brain Sciences;

Action: Lesley Hayman

29B   Recruitment and Marketing: Hobsons Connect
(StRAFC Minute 21, 07.03.16)

29B.1   StRAFC had received a presentation by SRM officers on the Hobsons Connect, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to manage automated communication with prospective students and offer holders. StRAFC had approved the SRM proposal that the provision of copy/content for subject specific enquirer and offer holder communications in the system should be mandatory. It had agreed that SRM officers undertake the necessary work with departments to implement this and report on progress to the next meeting.

29B.2   The SRM Director reported the following progress on implementation of the CRM system:

a)   The Director of Communications and Marketing and the SRM Director had met with the Registrar and the Director of Access and Admissions and agreed a coordinated approach to the information collected from departments, which would avoid any duplication.

b)   The Chair had written to the Deans of Faculty requesting that they nominate, from Faculty Tutors and Faculty Communication Managers, people to coordinate their departments' input to the CRM.

c)   Procedures had been established, in liaison with PAMS colleagues, to ensure that the same type of quality control and checks are set up as used for the prospectus.

d)   Briefings and workshops are currently being run for faculties on the CRM system. The priority is to help fill in gaps in departmental/subject level communications and to then establish an annual update cycle for the system.

29C   Proposed Working Group on Student Accommodation Allocation and Related Matters
(StRAFC Minute 23, 07.03.16)

29C.1   The Registrar had informed StRAFC of meetings with students who had expressed discontent with accommodation costs and allocation and financial support from UCL and made requests for additional bursary funds. The discontent had in some instances culminated in rent strikes and demonstrations[2]. A working group had been proposed to consider these concerns and to discuss with the Student Experience Committee's Task and Finish Group on Student Accommodation how it might to proceed and then report on progress to StRAFC.

Engineering Sciences; Institute of Education; Laws; Mathematics and Physical Sciences; Population Health Sciences and Social and Historical Sciences.

[2] UCL later announced an update on negotiations with UCL Union and student groups on these matters on 24 June 2016: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/news-articles/0616/240616-ucl-uclu-ctr?utm_source=UCL%20%28Internal%20Communications%29&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=7268612_The%20Week%40UCL%20-%20Issue%20253

29C.2 The Registrar reported that the Working Group will be separate to the StEC group considering student accommodation and will focus on affordability issues and financial support for students. The group is in an evidence gathering stage, looking at data projections for 2017-18 and the limited funding available for additional bursaries with the Accommodation Team, DARO and Access and Admissions. The group, which will meet in the Autumn term, will also consider possibilities for rent profiling and other measures which might help more students from less well-off and non-traditional backgrounds. StRAFC will be kept informed of progress.

30 ADMISSIONS UPDATE
(PAPER 3-01)

30.1 ***Received*** – an update on the current admissions cycle by the Director of Access and Admissions, who reported:

a) As the UG admissions cycle neared its end, the vast majority of UG applications had been received and processed. The picture was positive overall with UCL 3% up on 2015. Home UK student applications had fallen by 2.1% on last year, though Home EU applications rose by 9.7%, and there is uncertainty over whether this will change with the Referendum result. Overseas applications also rose by 9%, but increases from China disguised falls in other markets.

b) In order to meet higher intake targets, more UG offers had been made this year though some departments had insufficient applicants who could meet the entry criteria. UCL has received the majority of Home UK/EU applicant acceptances for which the conversion rate has shown a slight increase on 0.8% (though there had been a large increase in offers). The conversion rate for Overseas students was 3.8% down, albeit with a large number of replies still to be received.

c) Initial modelling predicted that UCL will be 630 students short for the UK/EU target and 110 short for Overseas students. UCL will need to make up this shortfall by taking near miss applicants, and some departments continue to struggle in meeting targets.

d) UCAS is to publish UG equalities data and there is positive news for UCL, with it performing well against its main competitors. UCAS has calculated an average offer rates they expect to see for a range of characteristics (e.g. by ethnicity and gender) and UCL performed within expected margins for all the characteristics analysed, which none of its main competitors were able to achieve (including Oxbridge, LSE. Imperial College and King's College London). This demonstrated a fair and equitable admissions process.

e) PGT applications still have some time to run, but so far, excluding the IOE, have arisen by 2.4% for UK, and 8.9% for Overseas (again though reliant on large numbers from China). EU applications are down by 0.6%. Acceptances have risen by 3.4% overall, though there is a decline for the EU, perhaps showing some uncertainty in the UK's future in the European Union. Some faculties had received large application increases

(the Bartlett and Engineering) and the IOE continued to receive large numbers of applications from China.

f) PGR applications have also increased by 3.2%, though acceptances of offers are down by 6.9%. This reflected fewer offers and acceptances for UK and EU applications.

g) Affiliate applications for UK/EU students are similar to 2015, though Overseas applications are significantly lower. However, problems with partnership agreements has led to delays in processing offers of admission, which has led to decreases in acceptances for both UK/EU (down 23%) and Overseas (36%).

30.2   The following points were noted in the discussion:

a) Although the overseas figures were relatively strong compared with its key competitors (UCL takes market share from other institutions), removing the Chinese applications reveals a less comforting picture. There have been declines in applications from other far- East markets such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia (which had withdrawn scholarships for overseas study). UCL and other UK institutions were at risk in over-relying on one market and it was important to continue to develop recruitment in other countries, thus spreading the risk.

b) The affiliate issue was also a concern and it was reported that the processing problems had led to negative feedback in the United States and other countries and an associated decline in applications. This was costing UCL significant losses which had implications for its overall budget. Access and Admissions were re-organising its processes and re-structuring in order to address the issues (partly to do with timely signing-off of partnership agreements). This included development of a new on line application service which will improve the admissions process for affiliates. SRM is also doing all it can to reassure partner organisations overseas to encourage them to continue sending students to UCL.

RESOLVED:

30.3   That the Director of Access and Admissions checks comparative UG data for UCL with its key competitors and provide to the members.

Action: Bella Malins

31   SCHOLARSHIPS STRATEGY WORKING GROUP
(See also StRAFC Minute 21, 07.03.16)

31.1   StRAFC had noted at the previous meeting that the current Scholarships and Student Funding Strategy will end this year and had agreed to set up a working group to revise the strategy. The invitation for StRAFC members to join the working group is still open.

31.2   A greater sense of understanding is required of the scholarship provision in the faculties as this is greater than that managed centrally at UCL by the Student Funding. The Head of the SFO is circulating a template form to faculties to establish the extent and nature of the faculty awards. The working group will then meet once this work is conducted.

RESOLVED:

31.3   That members of StRAFC interested in joining the working group contact the Secretary.

Action: StRAFC Members to note

32   POSTGRADUATE STUDY OPEN DAY
(See also StRAFC Minute 24, 07.03.16)

32.1   StRAFC had discussed the UCL 2015 Graduate Fair held in December, which had been problematic in terms of attendance and issues with the venue used (the North Cloisters). It had agreed to invite the Graduate Marketing Manager (SRM) to attend the next meeting together with the Head of Student Recruitment Media (SRM) to report on the progress of the discussions with faculty and professional services staff to improve the next Open Day in December 2016.

32.2   The Head of Student Recruitment Media reported the following:

a) There is a large appetite amongst current UG students for the PG Study Open Day, but many wished to attend smaller faculty events, where it is difficult to manage their expectations in accessing a variety of staff. Students also wished to speak to professional services staff.
b) Students were more enthused by larger events with a greater faculty representation which should also be aimed at external applicants.
c) A planning group had been set up which had agreed the following future actions:
   - Coordinate faculty and school open days to establish a confederacy of linked events, with more extensive promotion;
   - Encourage programme level representation at the events;
   - Early booking of venue space;
   - Greater use of student ambassadors;
   - Rapid evaluation of events to make on-going improvements.
d) It was envisaged that the coordinated events would increase their value to students through greater access to programmes, including cross-disciplinary programmes and create a larger impact through pooled events. This should help achieve a greater sense of "UCL-ness" which would give more visibility to smaller programmes and departments. It was anticipated that numbers attending should rise to some 1500 to 2500 students.
e) All faculties were involved with the exception of Laws, which is waiting for the re-opening of its refurbished building next year to hold such

events. The IOE is enthusiastic and is deciding on which programmes to focus on. It is considering running tours from the main UCL Bloomsbury campus to the IOE.

32.3   The following points were noted in the discussion:

   a)   Students were able to book for the events through Hobsons Connect and this enabled tracking of those whom later applied to UCL. The Head of Student Recruitment Media would be checking this data. It was noted that the Faculty of Brain Sciences had tracked its 2014 PGT attendees, and found that 40-50% later enrolled, with the event clearly a worthwhile investment.
   b)   UCLU would be keen to be more involved in the events, in addition to the UCLU Vice-President who had attended in recent years.
   c)   It was noted that a good relationship with Room Bookings would be essential in order to ensure that suitable space and venues are located, with the Pavilion one possibility for events.

RESOLVED:

32.4   That StRAFC endorses the plans to improve and enhance the PG Study Open Day and that the Heads of PAMS and Student Recruitment Media report back to StRAFC on the outcomes of the events in the next session.

Action: Ian Bartlett and John Burnett

33   THE GRADUATE EXPERIENCE: PROSPECTUS AND APPLICATION PORTAL
(PAPER 3-02)

33.1   The SRM Director and the Head of Student Recruitment reported the following:

   a)   Faculties and departments had long complained about the graduate application portal, which provides an unwieldy experience for potential PG students in navigating from the on-line prospectus to the portal and then registering to make an application. The portal has a poorly optimised search capability, often leading to differently named degrees or the degree in question appearing far down the search result list. An example was given for MA History which appears as 21st on the list and on the second page.
   b)   Many potential applicants to the portal are put off from enrolling at UCL and analysis of visits in 2014 showed that only 8.8% of visitors then enrolled at UCL. Paper 3.01, a UCL customer service request, outlines the problems in detail and proposes a simpler solution arrived at through discussion with Portico Service, PAMS and other staff, outlining the potential benefits for UCL. This could be considerable both in terms of improved PG conversion rates leading to greater income and for UCL's

reputation. Risks were also outlined, which were the opposite of the potential benefits.

c) Funding had not yet been approved for the new system, but the proposal was widely supported by academic and professional services staff.

33.2　The following points were noted in the discussion:

a) The Director of Access and Admissions noted that there had been attempts to get funding for the proposed new process through the admissions process, but without success. The process would be expensive to set up and involve up to 60 working days to implement. It appeared to fall between Admissions and ISD areas of responsibility and thus had not been acted on before.

b) It was noted that the proposal would also embed analytics through-out the process, which would provide valuable business intelligence on the stages applicants were dropping out.

RESOLVED:

33.3　That the SRM Director and the Head of Student Recruitment Media discuss the proposal to improve the application portal processes with the Director of IT for Support Services (ISD) and report back to StRAFC for further discussion.
Action: Dr David Stevens and John Burnett

34　SHARED (FEE CONTRIBUTIONS) SCHOLARSHIPS
(PAPER 3-03)

34.1　StRAFC agreed to discuss this paper, tabled as a hard copy at the meeting, at the next meeting. In the meantime the SRM Director and the Head of Student Funding were advised to discuss the issue of fee discounts raised in the paper (such as CONACyT) with Faculty Deans.

RESOLVED:

34.2　That the SRM Director and Secretary circulate the paper to members electronically.
Action: Dr David Stevens and Rob Traynor

35　CHANGES TO MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS AGREEMENTS

35.1　The Head of Global Partnerships (GEO) reported that the GEO will continue to keep a record of UCL's international scholarship agreements and be involved in the initial stages of discussion with potential partners, giving a steer on their strategic fit, as well as providing advice at StRAFC. Student Recruitment Marketing (SRM) will be responsible for managing the international scholarship agreements and conducting negotiations with potential partners. The GEO has led on the negotiations with CONACyT, but future activity will be conducted by the SRM. The arrangements for StRAFC to sign-off the scholarship

agreements, either at the committee or by chair's action will continue, as will Student Funding Office management of the agreements once in place.

35.2   The SRM Director also confirmed the role of the SRM, formerly the International Office and noted that in addition to the above arrangements, the SRM will provide market research and analysis of international student markets to help UCL strategically and in making informed choices of partnerships.

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

36.1   ***Received –*** No minutes were received from StRAFC sub-groups and working groups since the previous meeting[3].

37   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

37.1   The Director of Access and Admissions reported that the Government's Higher Education and Research Bill, the White Paper on Education[4] and the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework had implications for student recruitment and access agreements. The second stage of the TEF is now being consulted on and the Office for Fair Access had written to institutions providing the opportunity, should they meet eligibility requirements, to adjust fees and access measures to reflect the new fee caps that they anticipated. OfIA had given institutions a deadline of 16 June 2016 to respond. It was agreed that the announcement of such sudden initiatives around the summer break may require a swift response at short notice.

RESOLVED:

37.2   That Chair's action be used where required as the institution responds to any initiatives or requests for the access agreement, or other matters arising from the TEF or the Government's Higher Education Bill.
Action: StRAFC Members to note

38   DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

38.1   StRAFC meeting dates for 2016-17 will be scheduled soon and circulated to members.

Rob Traynor
StRAFC Secretary

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13 July 2016

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

[4] See: *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*