



STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS AND FUNDING COMMITTEE

7 March 2016

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Ms Wendy Appleby, Mr David Ashton, 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, Ms Suguna Nair, Dr Yvo Pokern, Ms Katy Redfern, Mr Tom Rowson, Dr David Stevens, Mr Mark Sudbury, Ms Olga Thomas, Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker, Ms Wahida Samie and Professor Jo Wolff

In attendance: Mr Ciarán Moynihan, Ms Monika Harms, Dr Rachel Wilde (for Professor Norbert Pachler) and Mr Rob Traynor (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Mark Emberton, Dr Claire Maxwell, Dr Michael Munday and Professor Norbert Pachler

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

16 MINUTES OF 10 DECEMBER 2015 MEETING

- 16.1 **Approved** – the Minutes of the StRAFC meeting held on 10 December 2015 [StRAFC Minutes 1-15, 2015-16].

17 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

17A Constitution and Terms of Reference 2015-16

(StRAFC Minute 2, 10.12.15 and PAPER 1-01 revised. See also Item 19 below)

17A.1 **Received** – the revised constitution, membership and terms of reference of StRAFC.

17A.2 The Chair welcomed the following new members to the StRAFC:

- Professor Mark Emberton – SLMS Faculty Dean
- Ms Lesley Hayman and Rebecca Reiner – Global Engagement Office (they will share representation and attend alternate meetings)
- Ms Michelle Moore - DARO

17A.3 The Chair thanked Mrs Lori Houlihan for her contribution to the Committee.

17B Scholarships Update and Strategy

(StRAFC Minute 6, 10.12.15)

17B.1 The Director of Planning (and new Chair of the SOPG) had met with the Head of Student Funding to discuss how SOPG will review the Student Scholarships and Funding Strategy. The next meeting of SOPG (6 June) will discuss a draft briefing paper and will report back to StRAFC with its recommendations to bring the strategy in line with UCL 2034 and other key over-arching strategies.

17C Postgraduate Taught Deposits Task and Finish Group Update and Notes of 6 October 2015 Meeting

(StRAFC Minute 7, 10.12.15)

17C.1 The Registrar and Chair of the Task and Finish Group reported that deposits for PGT programmes will not be introduced for 2016-17. More work is required on the functionality required for the student records system and the SMT has requested further discussion with departments to ascertain the demand. The intention is to introduce the deposits in 2017-18, with systems fully developed to enable this and following further consultation with departments.

18 CONACyT SCHOLARSHIP AGREEMENT AND DIVERSIFICATION OF RECRUITMENT MARKETS

(Paper 2.01 and 2.02)

18.1 UCL is in discussions with CONACyT (Mexico's Council for promoting science and technology) regarding renewal of its partnership agreement. Mr Ciarán Moynihan, the GEO Senior Partnership Manager (North and Latin America) introduced the item and reported the findings of a working group set up by the Vice-Provost (International) to consider the CONACyT proposal:

- a) The agreement has enabled UCL to recruit top Mexican PGR and PGT students on CONACyT scholarships since 2005. Numbers have increased since 2012 and fee income received by UCL was £1.3 million for 2015-16.
- b) The most recent agreement, signed in 2012, took place against the background of an aggressive campaign by CONACyT with UK HEIs, which saw UCL agree to a 25% fee discount for CONACyT students, in line with

20 other UK institutions. Imperial College and Oxford University did not agree to this and thus are no longer receiving CONACyT students.

- c) The main pros for agreeing to the proposal were the continuation of recruitment of high quality Mexican PGR students and the importance of Mexico, a key South American target in UCL's Global Engagement and Diversification of Recruitment strategies.
- d) The main cons were the reduction in the overall margins on fee income, which could affect departments in times of financial restraint and the possibility of other countries replicating CONACyT's tactics to demand similar partnership deals.
- e) The working group proposed that UCL adopt a compromise position in its negotiations with CONACyT and accept a 30% fee discount for PGR students, but to retain the 25% reduction for PGT students.

18.2 The Head of Student Recruitment Operations (SRM) reported the following:

- a) UCL's history of recruitment from Mexico dates back to the early 2000s and the Mexican education councils had requested fee discounts then, which UCL did not then accept. This led to a fall in Mexican student recruitment by some 30%. Since UCL agreed to fee discounts with CONACyT in 2012, these students and Mexican students generally, increased in numbers.
- b) The UCL strategy of diversification of its international student recruitment activities is designed to prevent an over reliance on single markets for students, in particular China, which exposes institutions to significant risks should the political or economic situation change in those countries and cut off the supply of quality students. The strategy has been successful so far with UCL as now the largest recruiter of international students in the UCL and also recruiting more widely than its Russell Group and sector peers. This reduces risks and means that UCL is well placed to build on opportunities. Mexico is an important target country in the strategy. The Global Engagement Strategy calls for UCL to continue with this strategy.
- c) As the 2012 agreement had now closed, CONACyT had removed UCL from its list of possible destinations for students, so there will likely be a reduction in numbers for 2016-17 in any case.

18.3 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) Faculties had raised concerns with a possible domino effect of accepting the CONACyT terms for the agreement, with other countries then trying to force through similar deals. However, it was noted that CONACyT was by far the largest of these bodies in South America and therefore offered the highest rewards for HEIs. Other countries had much weaker negotiating positions. UCL could also adopt a tactic of only consider such proposals from target countries as identified in the Global Engagement Strategy.
- b) It appeared from the negotiations with CONACyT that they would not back down on the proposal for a 30% fee discount on PGR students. Their motivation for requesting the increase was difficulties in the Mexican economy and a decline in the overall value of the peso.

RESOLVED:

- 18.4 That StRAFC supports 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.

Action: Ciarán Moynihan

19 REVIEW OF STRAFC'S PERFORMANCE

- 19.1 The Chair introduced the item and noted the following points:

- a) The merger between StRAFC's predecessor committees had produced a large committee covering a wide range of business. It is important to consider from time to time how well it is meeting its terms of reference and for this meeting, Point 8:

To keep under review: (i) the effectiveness of scholarships administration within UCL and (ii) the financial position and distribution of UCL's scholarships funds.

- b) A greater understanding is required of scholarships provision in the wider sector, including current and best practice and how UCL compares with its peers. Consideration can then be given as to how UCL can improve its provision and make better use of the funding for scholarships and student funding. A working group was suggested to conduct more detailed discussion than can be provided by StRAFC with its busy agendas.

- 19.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) The scholarship and other funding managed centrally by the SFO was clear and transparent, but the majority of funding was spent at faculty level and it was difficult to gain oversight of this. The SFO was not responsible for administering these schemes and it was suggested that an institutional level financial planning model might be required. It was noted the Division of Finance and Business Affairs had recently conducted analysis into UCL's financial sustainability and had raised questions on the use of matched funding, particularly for doctoral training with research councils. It would be useful to factor this data into the discussions.
- b) The faculty schemes covered many types of funding including the matched funding, endowments, hardship funding, scholarships and prizes. Many were longstanding arrangements and not necessarily under the Deans' control. Matched funding could also be difficult for faculties, with some losing money through this, but having to retain agreements so as not to affect other sources of funding. Although this funding is subject to internal audit, Deans would welcome more consistency and transparency in how they are offered, and importantly, to make the provision more easily understood by students.

- c) It was noted that the SOPG had tried to address these issues when developing the scholarships and student funding strategy. This had resulted in greater efficiency in the management of central funds, as well as clear information on these funds for students via the prospectus and SFO managed webpages. However, the matter of greater institutional oversight of funding outside of the centre had proven more difficult to achieve. The working group would need to have very clear terms of reference itself to ensure that it asks the right questions to explore these issues.
- d) It was important that UCL also retains its sense of a clear vision of the support offered to students through scholarships and bursaries. This is attractive to donors and it is possible to steer them to central schemes.

RESOLVED:

- 19.3 That StRAFC establish a working group to revisit the scholarships and student funding strategy and to consider: (i) current and best practice in the wider sector, (ii) how to gain a greater oversight of faculty provision and (iii) make recommendations to improve efficiency and transparency of all the provision.
Action: StRAFC members to note
- 19.4 That StRAFC members interested in joining the working group contact the StRAFC Secretary.
Action: StRAFC members and Rob Traynor

20 ADMISSIONS UPDATE
(PAPER 2-03)

- 20.1 **Received** – an update on the current admissions cycle by the Director of Access and Admissions, who reported:
 - a) The majority of UG applications have now been received and UCL is 3.1% up on last year, with the national average at 0.39%, whilst the aggregate average for the main competitors (as identified by UCAS) is at 2.71%. Home UK student applications have fallen by 2.2% on last year, though Home EU (9.4%) and Overseas (7.8%) have both risen and are ahead of the national average.
 - b) UG application data was modelled against offer targets for the SMT and although the data is not robust, does provide an indication of likely trends. A shortfall on both UK/EU and Overseas targets is predicted, though UCL should be able to meet its overall targets by taking near miss applicants. However, some departments are struggling to meet targets.
 - c) There is a specific issue in Malaysia, with UG scholarship holders required to study in home institutions. Affected faculties have been given the option of increasing offers elsewhere to compensate for any loss in students.
 - d) PGT applications have arisen by over 10% (over 24% including the IOE), despite the increase to £75 for the application fee. Overseas students have risen the most and the data indicates that this is a healthy position. However, it was cautioned that last year actual enrolments did not match this. The IOE has received a particular surge in Chinese applications.

- e) PGR applications have also increased by almost 7%, though there is some concern as acceptances of offers are down by 11%, despite an increase in MRes applications. It was noted that lower PGT numbers could affect PGR recruitment in later years.

21 RECRUITMENT AND MARKETING: HOBSONS CONNECT CRM

(PAPER 2-04)

- 21.1 **Received** – a presentation from Ms Monika Harms, International Liaison and Recruitment Manager (SRM) who reported, together with the Head of Student Recruitment Operations (SRM), the following points:
- a) UCL has invested in a specialised Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to manage automated communication with prospective students and offer holders. The CRM system chosen, Hobsons Connect, is now in wide use among UK universities with over 60 HEIs using it.
 - b) The system is able to record student details and their subject interest through a variety of possible entry points (such as enquiry forms, registration forms for open days and transfer of applicant data from SITS). The system then uses the data to set up automated communication plans, which can send staggered e-mails and texts at various stages of the application and offer process. It is also used to automate the prospectus request and dispatch processes.
 - c) StRAFC was shown examples of “keep warm” communications from a number of departments including the Cancer Institute. The system also tracks the opening of communications such as e-mails and texts by students and this is very high at 70% (a 20% opening rate is considered good in general marketing). The investment required of departments is low following initial production of communications such as emails, as the actual sending is then automated. Revision will then only be required on an annual basis.
 - d) Hobsons Connect can also provide excellent recruitment data for UCL, on all stages from enquiries to acceptances of offers of admission. SRM is proposing that the provision of copy/content for subject specific enquirer and offer holder communications in the system should be compulsory. This will bring the CRM into line with the existing mandatory subject / department prospectus entry and ensure comprehensive subject coverage and provide prospective students and offer holders with a consistent level of information.
- 21.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:
- a) There were some concerns that making the use of Hobsons Connect mandatory as proposed by SRM could duplicate work already undertaken in departments and faculties. This is extensive in some faculties and has been heavily invested in. However, it was noted that it was not the intention to replicate departmental activity, only to provide a consistent baseline of information to prospective students. The system could also help to free up some of the work undertaken in departments.

RESOLVED:

- 21.3 That StRAFC approves the SRM proposal that the provision of copy/content for subject specific enquirer and offer holder communications in the system should be mandatory. SRM officers should undertake the necessary work with departments to implement this and report on progress to the next meeting.

Action: David Stevens and Monika Harms

22 ELITE SPORTS AND RECRUITMENT PRACTICE

(PAPER 2-05)

- 22.1 The UCLU Education and Campaigns Officer and the Postgraduate Students Officer introduced the item and reported:
- a) Elite athletes are often also successful academically, with the Russell Group is prominent among the top 30 ranked sports universities. However, support is needed to ensure that they are able to study and to compete at a high level in their chosen fields.
 - b) UCLU's Elite Athlete Programme is designed to support such students and offers free gym membership, access to free physiotherapy, sports massage & nutritional support, one-to-one bespoke strength and conditioning training and financial support for travel to competitions.
 - c) However, it is difficult for these students to hear about the EAP or those managing the programme to be notified when these athlete apply to UCL. Once here, there is also some inconsistency in departments, with some highly supportive of athletes, but others being less flexible which can provide a great deal of stress to these students.
 - d) Other institutions such as Kings College London, have well established schemes to help elite athletes and this translates into good publicity for the institution when the students are successful (such as Ms Christine Ohuruogu for UCL during the 2012 Olympics).
 - e) UCLU proposes that UCL work with it on an action plan to include the following aims:
 - (i) Identify Elite Athletes at the earliest stage of the university application process;
 - (ii) Inform students of the financial and sports specific support available to them through the EAP.
 - (iii) Provide prospective students with accurate information on Elite Sport at UCL.
 - (iv) Ensure UCL's academic support systems are appropriate for students on the EAP.
 - (v) Provide training/resources for relevant staff on the specific needs of this student group.
- 22.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) There were possible data protection issues in releasing application information to UCLU for the EAP. Students would need to be asked if they were happy to be identified and have their details passed on.
- b) Information on the scheme could be added to the prospectus. UCLU officers considered this to be very helpful as the student athletes often complained of not being able to find the information on the UCL website.
- c) It would also be helpful to flag the EAP scheme to Departmental Tutors, as they were not likely to be aware of it and would be in a good position to help support these students. Academic support could also be looked at on an individual basis.

RESOLVED:

- 22.3 That the Head of Student Recruitment Media (SRM) liaise with UCLU officers to help them inform students of the scheme in the prospectus and other UCL communications.

Action: Ian Bartlett and UCLU Officers

23 PROPOSED WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT ACCOMMODATION ALLOCATION AND RELATED MATTERS

- 23.1 The Registrar introduced the item and reported:

- a) There had been widespread student unhappiness with accommodation matters including its cost and how it is allocated, in some instances culminating in rent strikes and demonstrations.
- b) The Registrar had met students to discuss their concerns and noted that they also related to financial support from UCL, which many felt was not well provided. There were requests for more bursary funds to be made available.
- c) The proposed working group will discuss how to proceed with the Student Experience Committee's Task and Finish Group on Student Accommodation, which had been set up in the summer to discuss with students their concerns around the quality of the accommodation and other issues.

RESOLVED:

- 23.2 That the Registrar provide an update on the progress of the working group to the next meeting.

Action: Wendy Appleby

24 POSTGRADUATE STUDY OPEN DAY REPORT

(Paper 2-06 and Minute 14, AOB, 10.12.15)

- 24.1 The Head of Student Recruitment Media (SRM) introduced the item, which had been briefly discussed under Any Other Business at the previous meeting and reported:

- a) The UCL 2015 Graduate Fair was held in December and was aimed at current UCL students, following a successful pilot in 2014.
- b) The fair was problematic, with only half of students who had registered turning up. There were also some issues with the venue used, the North Cloisters, which appeared to confuse some students wishing to use it as a transit route and may have affected “passing trade”. It was suggested that the pavilion might be a better venue next time.
- c) The lower numbers may also have been affected by some faculties holding their own events around the same time.
- d) It was suggested that a forum of faculty and professional services colleagues should be put together to review the event, consider future activity and create more value for prospective students. This forum would consider whether restructuring the Graduate Fair as an event supporting faculty-based open days would be a better approach. The Graduate Marketing Manager (SRM) was beginning to coordinate the necessary activity required.

24.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) Student numbers were reported to be down at other graduate events in UCL and in other institutions such as the LSE.
- b) It was questioned whether the right people were being targeted for the Open Day. It was questioned whether PGR students felt that the events are not applicable to them.
- c) It was suggested that data from the Hobsons Connect system might be used to try and identify any trends in groups of students attending or not attending the Open Days.

RESOLVED:

24.3 That the Graduate Marketing Manager (SRM) attend the next meeting together with the Head of Student Recruitment Media (SRM) and report on the progress of the discussions with faculty and professional services staff, as well as on suggestions for the next Open Day in December.

Action: Ian Bartlett and John Burnett

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

25.1 **Received** – No minutes were received from StRAFC sub-groups and working groups since the previous meeting¹.

26 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

26.1 The final StRAFC meeting of the 2015-16 session is scheduled for:

6 June 2016 (11am Haldane Room)

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

Rob Traynor
StRAFC Secretary

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