STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS AND FUNDING COMMITTEE

Monday 8 June 2015

MINUTES

PRESENT

Professor Anthony Smith (Chair)

Ms Wendy Appleby; Mr David Ashton; Dr Jan Axmacher; Mr Ian Bartlett;
Professor David Bogle; Ms Mariana Ceccotti; Dr Caroline Essex; Dr Julie Evans;
Ms Valerie Hogg; Mrs Lori Houlihan Mr Lukmaan Kolia; Ms Bella Malins;
Professor Norbert Pachler; Dr Yvo Pokern; Ms Katy Redfern; Dr David Stevens;
Mr Mark Sudbury; Ms Olga Thomas and Professor Jo Wolff

In attendance: Ms Julia Dawson, Mr Tom Rowson, Ms Catherine Thomson and Mr Rob
Traynor (*Secretary*)

Apologies for absence were received from: Professor Anthony Finkelstein, Mr Kevin King,
Dr Michael Munday and Professor Don Pennington[1]

Key to abbreviations:
AASG   Access Agreement Steering Group
ARP   Admissions Requirement Panel
EdCom   Education Committee
HEI   Higher Education Institute
PGT   Postgraduate Taught
PGR   Postgraduate Research
SRS   Student and Registry Services
StRAFC   Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee
UG   Undergraduate
WP   Widening Participation

10   MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 23 MARCH 2015

Confirmed:

10.1   The Minutes of the meeting of StRAFC held on 23 March 2015 *[StRAFC Mins.1-9]*.

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[1] Following the meeting, it was confirmed that Professor Norbert Pachler will represent the Institute of
Education in place of Professor Pennington.

11   MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES
[See Items 12 and 16 below]

11A   Reports of Sub-Groups, Working Groups etc of StRAFC
[StRAFC Min. 7, 23.03.15]

> ***Noted:***

11A.1 The Director of Student Administration provided an update in reply to the Dean of Engineering's concerns of identifying students' sources of funding on Portico. As this information is not currently asked for, it cannot be seen unless students self-declare. However, it would be possible to request this information in future by adding fields to the relevant SITS pages and further thought will be given to this by SRS.

12   POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT DEPOSITS TASK AND FINISH GROUP: REPORT
[StRAFC Min. 6, 23.03.15]

> ***Noted:***

12.1   The PGT Deposits Task and Finish Group report and recommendations at: <u>StRAFC 2/01 (14-15)</u>, introduced by the Registrar.

12.2   The Registrar noted the following:
- Deposits could help as an additional tool in student number planning for larger, oversubscribed programmes. However, deposits are not a "magic bullet" to solve problems with overall number planning at the institutional level.
- A flexible approach allowing departments the freedom to choose whether to charge a deposit on a programme by programme basis is recommended. This would not be universal with no compulsion to use them. UCL overseas campuses can also decide for themselves on their use.
- There is widespread use of deposits within the sector but with varied practice. They are often charged for Overseas students to address specific problems such the number of VISA refusals by the UK Border Agency. However this is not an issue for UCL and where used, deposits should apply to all student groups.
- A set charge for the deposits is recommended as a percentage of the tuition fee would be less transparent to students on what they will pay. A set fee will also be easier to manage on the SITS and finance systems.
- Departments could choose from three flat rates, to be agreed later, to allow for variation between programmes' tuition fees and student demographics.
- Further discussion of the criteria for possible exemptions to deposits with relevant UCL professional services departments should be undertaken. This should include consideration of financial hardship, students on scholarships and those who had received WP bursaries and support in their UG studies.
- It is possible to implement deposits for PGT programmes in 2016-17.

> ***Discussion:***

12.3   The following points were discussed:
- Members were generally positive about deposits and the flexibility to make use of them, with a choice of set rates.
- It was noted that the policy and provision for deposits needs to be in place soon in order for the information, including the programmes intending to use them, to be included in the PGT prospectus. Information to students needed to be clear, transparent and mindful of the Competition and Marketing Authority rules.

- Variable deposit rates could confuse students as they usually apply for more than one programme. However, programmes charging deposits could present this positively, emphasising the programme's popularity and the need for deposits to manage numbers and improve the student experience.
- It was suggested that deposits could put off part-time students, many of whom were working in order to be able to afford the fees. Although another view was that many part-time students, particularly from more vocational and/or professions related programmes, are comparatively well-off and able to afford deposits. This would need to be reviewed after the first cycle.

RESOLVED:

12.4   That StRAFC: (i) approves the first four Task and Finish Group recommendations, (ii) requests further consideration of the other recommendations and (iii) the Group to amend the report for submission and formal approval to AC (25 June 2015).
Action: Wendy Appleby and Rob Traynor

13   "REALISING OPPORTUNITIES" SCHEME

Noted:

13.1   An oral report on the "Realising Opportunities" scheme from the Director of Access and Admissions. The following points were noted:
- UCL is joining this nationwide scheme for 2016 which is aimed at recruiting more students from WP backgrounds. Fourteen other HEIs are involved in the scheme, many from the Russell Group. The scheme involves mentoring for the students by academics and other professionals.
- Applications from successful scheme participants may receive lower offers of admission, up to two grades below. However, applicants will need to submit a piece of assessed work or a project, marked by academics from a peer HEI.

14   REPORTS OF SUB-GROUPS, WORKING GROUPS ETC OF StRAFC

Noted:

14.1   StRAFC officers received on behalf of the Committee minutes of the following, available on the [StRAFC SharePoint](#):

- AASG – 4 February 2015
- ARP – 18 September 2014

15   REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ACCESS AND ADMISSIONS

Noted:

15.1   An update on the current admissions cycle at: StRAFC 2/02 (14-15), introduced by the Director of Access and Admissions. The following points were noted:
- UCL had seen an overall rise in UG applications for both UK/EU (+6.5%) and Overseas (+4.9%) on last year. However, there is wide variation across faculties, with some experiencing decreases.
- As the UG market is increasingly competitive, more offers are made to meet intake targets (UK/EU 15.9% and Overseas 14.6%). However, most faculties

have not been able to meet them, as the conversion rate of offers to admission had declined since last year. UCL may have to accept a large number of near-miss applicants and projected outcomes will be given to faculties in June.
- PGT applications are healthier with a 9% increase and a 31.6% increase in offer acceptances on last year.
- The PGR comparative application data is not robust due to processing changes in some faculties since last year. However, the offer and acceptance data is more robust and whilst showing a decline in UK offers (-15%), EU (+30%) and Overseas (+5%) acceptances of offers have both increased. MRes applications reflect the main PGR figures and these programmes are increasing at UCL. It is expected that UCL will meet the targets for PGR.

Discussion:

15.2   The following points were noted:
- Some departments are over-lapping at PGT and PGR level and exchanging target figures. Although this is helping the overall faculty numbers there is a risk of compromising on the quality of PGR students.
- Large number of the Overseas students are from China and whilst this market is currently buoyant there are risks in recruiting such high numbers from just one country. However, it was noted that UCL recruits one of the most diverse range of Overseas students in the Russell Group.

RESOLVED:

15.3   That the Director of Access and Admissions add to the data in future: (i) the faculty target figures to see progress and to consider whether the targets are realistic and (ii) the numbers for affiliate students.
   Action: Bella Malins

16   STUDENT RECRUITMENT MARKETING AT UCL: CONTEXT, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE
   [StRAFC Min. 4, 23.03.15]

Noted:

16.1   StRAFC had agreed to focus on particular themes at each meeting, with Marketing and Recruitment the first area for consideration.

16.2   At StRAFC 2/03 (14-15), a note and a presentation[2] by the Head of the International Office, the Head of Publications and Marketing Services and Ms Catherine Thomson, Marketing and Communications Manager (Joint Faculties of Arts and Humanities and Social and Historical Sciences). Mr Tom Rowson, Director of Planning was also in attendance. The presentation took place in three main parts (see below)

Discussion:

16.3   *What the market might look like in future:*
- Graphs and bar charts showed changes in the number of international students in the UK and key English-speaking competitors (USA, Australia and Canada). While there had been an increase in the number of international students going to these countries in the last five years the UK's market share had declined. The

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[2] The PowerPoint slides of the presentation are available on the StRAFC SharePoint.

absolute number of international student enrolments in the UK had also suffered a recent reverse.

- Increased competition from other countries had affected the recruitment market as had changes in government policies, such as more stringent visa requirements introduced in Australia (subsequently reversed) and the UK. E.g. the number of Indian students enrolled in UK has declined by50%.
- During this period total international student enrolments at UK universities had grown by 10% and at Russell Group universities by 28%. The growth at UCL had been 49%.
- UCL had grown against trend by taking market share from competitors with our share of international students at Russell Group universities rising from 5 to 6.5%.
- The presentation highlighted the importance for student number planning of tensioning ambition for growth in departmental and faculty plans with the size of the market. There are already programmes at UCL which have a 95% market share and therefore significant growth would not be achievable. There is movement on more 'joined up' thinking on growth and greater planning at institutional and faculty levels. The plans to grow numbers by 15-20% over the next few years will be matched up to faculty plans and infrastructure management with the various professional services and with the market.

16.4 *Marketing processes for recruitment and website development:*
- UCL prospectus web pages had been re-designed in the last year and are more user friendly for mobile device users, though still desktop compatible. This was demonstrated through a search for specific prospectus information by members' mobile devices, successfully achieved by most participants in the meeting.
- The use of mobiles and tablets in accessing UCL webpages is increasing each year and it is essential that website pages are easily accessible and navigable. It is important that UCL continues to invest in improvements.
- It is also important that the website feature highly in search engine queries. Most students and web-users go through Google.
- It was noted that some departments underestimate how long it takes to plan and market new programmes. This should be helped by the new programme approval process, recently approved by EdCom, which has an initial planning stage to enable earlier market research and resource finding. This should weed out non-viable programmes and save academic time by ensuring feasibility before reaching the later stages of the process, such as curriculum design.

16.5 *Working collaboratively with faculties and departments to market programmes:*
- The Marketing and Communications Manager reported on her role as an intermediary between faculties, SRS and the International Office. This involved advising departments on market research for proposed programmes, ensuring shared objectives in recruitment marketing and collaboration with UCL, faculty and departmental recruitment events.
- It is essential that faculties and departments understand their market and develop realistic recruitment targets. Market research analysis provided by the International Office can help with this.
- Communication with applicants in the main mediums that they are using is important in order to influence them to choose UCL and to build relationships. The Hobsons Connect e-mail system helps with this and enables tailored contact with applicants and programme promotion. It can track potential students, see who has applied and provide timely communications to them. It can also promote recruitment and conversion events.

- The discussion noted other initiatives including sessions and events with parents, a major influence on student university choice and the use of alumni and current students in recruitment events.

RESOLVED:

16.6   StRAFC to be kept informed of progress of developments in marketing and recruitment.
Action: StRAFC members to note

17   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

17A   StRAFC Members Leaving the Committee

Noted:

17A.1 The Chair thanked the student representatives and wished them the best of luck in their future endeavours.

18   DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Noted:

18.1   No further StRAFC meetings were scheduled in 2014-15. Dates for meetings in 2015-16 will be circulated following the meeting.

Rob Traynor
StRAFC Secretary

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