



STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS AND FUNDING COMMITTEE

17 December 2018

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Dr Tracey Allen, Dr Simon Banks, Ms Fernanda Bates, Ms Cathy Brown, Professor David Bogle, Mr Neil Green, Mr Kevin King, Ms Collette Lux, Ms Bella Malins, Professor Michael Munday, Mr Saddiqur Rahman, Ms Katy Redfern, Ms Julie Rolls and Dr David Sim

In attendance: Mr Ashley Doolan (for Professor Stella Bruzzi), Ms Susan Martin (for Item 7), Mr Temoor Raja (Access and Admissions observer) and Mr Rob Traynor (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms Wendy Appleby, Professor Stella Bruzzi, Mr Farooq Dean, Professor Mark Emberton, Dr Julie Evans, Dr Elinor Jones, Mr Ciaran Moynihan, Mr Tom Rowson, Dr David Stevens, Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker, Ms Olga Thomas and Professor Norbert Pachler

Key to abbreviations:

AC	Academic Committee
CAM	Communications and Marketing
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
EdCom	Education Committee
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
OfS	Office for Students
PGT	Postgraduate Taught
PGR	Postgraduate Research
OVPEA	Office of the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs)
SFO	Student Funding Office
SRM	Student Recruitment Media
StRAFC	Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee
TOPS	Transforming our Professional Services
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UG	Undergraduate

PART 1: PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1 CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE 2018-19

[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:

- Dr Tracey Allen, Faculty Tutor, Institute of Education
- Ms Fernanda Bates, International Manager, Institute of Education (attending as part of the Admissions Tutor group as listed in the membership)
- Mr Farooq Dean, Education Officer, the Students' Union
- Mr Saddiqur Rahman, Postgraduate Students Officer, the Student's Union
- Ms Julie Rolls, Head of Student Recruitment Media (CAM)

2 MINUTES OF 11 JUNE 2018 MEETING

[StRAFC Minutes 13-22, 2017-18].

2.1 **Approved** – the Minutes of the StRAFC meeting held on 11 June 2018.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3A Academic Manual Chapter 1: Student Recruitment and Admissions Draft Text (Minute 17, 11.06.2018)

3A.1 **Noted** - the draft of Chapter 1 approved at the last meeting was subsequently submitted to Education Committee (19 July 2018) for final consideration and formal approval. The 2018-19 Academic Manual was then published at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/chapters/chapter-1-student-recruitment-and-admissions>

4 CHAIR'S ACTION: ASHINAGA SCHOLARSHIPS PROGRAMME

[PAPER 1-02]

4.1 **Noted** – a scholarships partnership with Ashinaga, a large Japanese charity, was approved by Chair's action during the summer. UCL would work with Ashinaga on a scholarships programme to support students from sub-Saharan Africa. It was further noted that the partnership would enhance UCL's strategic objectives, in particular the Global Engagement Strategy, by continuing to diversify international student recruitment markets and the Scholarships and Student Funding Strategy through introducing additional scholarships for students from low-income countries. Full details of the partnership were outlined in the accompanying paper submitted by the Head of Student Funding.

PART 2: MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

5 ADMISSIONS UPDATE

(PAPER 1-03)

5.1 **Received** – a summary of the 2018 admissions cycle by the Director of Access and Admissions, who reported:

- a) The majority of faculties had met or exceeded their UG Year 1 targets and UCL was only 9 short of the overall target. This was a remarkable achievement considering the difficult market conditions, with increasing competition for students, a declining 18-year-old demographic and the

uncertainties with Brexit resulting in declining EU applications. The Director thanked the faculties and departments for their hard work in achieving this.

- b) UG applications had increased by 14.7% overall with offer targets increased to address the two previous cycles' declines in offer to acceptance conversion rates. The 9.5% increase in offers of admission contributed to a 12% increase in acceptances. There were concerns with the lack of quality of UK students in some areas, which had been affected by the lower 18-year-old demographic and lower "A" level grades being achieved since the curriculum changes.
- c) PGR applications increased by 11% overall, following last year's decline, returning to 2016-17 levels. There was a 1% drop in the number of offers made, but this was balanced by an increase (+2.4%) in acceptances. EU applications declined (-28%) but were offset by an increase in offers made (+2%), which in turn led to a 10.7% increase in acceptances.
- d) MRes applications also increased (+15%), though offers (-1.7%) and acceptances (-4.3%) declined. This was affected by the large decline in EU applications affected by Brexit (-20.6%), though offset by increased UK (+46%) and Overseas (15%) figures.
- e) The large increase (+19%) in Overseas PGT applications offset declines in UK (-2.8%) and EU (-1.6%), and led to a small decline in acceptances overall (-2.3%), although overseas numbers were up (1.2%). Offers and acceptances all increased, despite some concerns mid-cycle. There were concerns regarding the UK market with potential students weighing up taking on more debt against better employment prospects.
- f) UK/EU affiliate applications (-16.9%) and acceptances (-4.8%) continued to decline and there was also a decline in Overseas applications (-4.7%) which meant a return to the previous trend of declining numbers after last year's improved figures. Overall applications (-8.1%), offers (-14.3%) and acceptances (-2.9%) all decreased, which was concerning as there were concerted efforts to improve the service levels for affiliate applications.

5.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) Increased competition for UG applications meant that in some areas UCL was not the first choice for the best students, not only against Oxbridge, but also against local competitors such as LSE and Imperial. There was also a concern that King's College London and Queen Mary were presenting a greater challenge. UCL needed to improve its messages to prospective students and to also consider widening its geographic range, as its UK students were mainly drawn from London and South-East. Consideration may be needed for improve on its UK-wide marketing to extend its appeal.
- b) It was suggested that marketing for PG students might be enhanced, particularly in terms of liaison between CAM, faculties and departments. PGT marketing decisions often appeared to be made at programme level rather than departmental and there may be room to scale up and enhance this with other programmes.

- c) There were anecdotal reports that some student representatives had raised concerns with the homogeneity of student groups, which on some programmes were perceived as dominating the student body, creating cliques and leading to feelings of exclusion from those outside the group. Students placing their concerns on social media sites such as the Student Room, might deter other students from applying to these programmes. It was noted that the UCL recruitment strategy was intended to maximise the diversity of its students, though some programmes attracted many applications from the larger overseas markets such as China and the USA.
- d) There was some evidence that affiliate students were moving towards shorter engagements with UCL, including attending summer schools. Affiliates were an important source of future graduate students, so it was imperative to keep the Europe and North America markets buoyant. One problem noted was that when large numbers of affiliates were attracted to specific subjects, this could affect the quality of the student experience, as well as place strains on the department's delivery of provision. It was suggested that consideration was needed to improve faculty oversight of affiliate recruitment in order to better support the affected departments and allow their greater input into the wider strategy for recruitment.

5.3 The Director of Access and Admissions informed members that real time UG and PGT admissions data, as well as data on progression and award, was available on the Tableau website run by the UCL Data and Insight Team (contact: dataandinsight@ucl.ac.uk): [UCL Tableau site](#).

6 DISCLOSURE OF CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS POLICY IN THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

(PAPER 1-04)

6.1 **Received** – Paper 1-04 from the Director of Access and Admissions, outlining a proposed policy for UCL's consideration of criminal convictions in the admissions process, following a review prompted by the introduction of GDPR. The Director noted the following:

- a) UCL had previously asked all applicants at the point of application whether they had a criminal conviction, with this information gathered by UCAS for UG students and by a question on the UCL PG application form. Those declaring a conviction were then asked to provide further details, with serious offences considered by a Criminal Conviction Panel.
- b) Following the introduction of GDPR, UCAS removed this question for applicants with the exception of those programmes requiring an enhanced DBS check (at UCL this includes the MBBS, MPharm Pharmacy, teacher training and programmes concerning children).
- c) Over 36 institutions including UCL had sought legal advice on the matter, but as case law had not yet advanced for this area, the advice was unclear. However, institutions were advised that it would not be considered proportionate to ask the question of all applicants at the point

of application, although for safeguarding purposes, applicants could be asked at the point of offer of admission whether they had an unspent criminal conviction.

- d) StRAFC was asked to consider whether UCL should follow this advice and include a criminal conviction question of applicants at the point of offer and whether a reply should be mandatory.
- e) It was also asked to consider adding a departmental representative (i.e. from the department concerned) to any convened Criminal Conviction Panel.

6.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) UCL had careful measures in place to ensure the safety of under eighteen students, including secure accommodation in UCL halls and local guardians. Students that disclosed serious criminal convictions were not allowed to reside in the UCL halls and had other checks to ensure that the under eighteen students would not be at risk.
- b) There was agreement that applicants to programmes requiring a DBS check should still be asked to declare any convictions at the point of application.
- c) There was general agreement that for other students the question should be asked at the point of offer of admission. However, there was some concern that students might perceive this as expressing a lack of trust by UCL and be put off from applying. Countering this was a view that UCL had a duty of care to its students to ensure their safety and needed to know whether applicants had serious criminal convictions in order to mitigate risk and also to provide the appropriate support and guidance to such students to help rehabilitation. It was agreed that any question should be accompanied by a clear explanation of its purpose and show the applicant that support was available at UCL.
- d) There was agreement with adding a departmental representative to the Criminal Conviction Panel and suggested that thought be given to ensure that there was appropriate training for this. There also needed to be appropriate guidance and support for departments to manage students with criminal convictions.
- e) There was less agreement with the proposal that the criminal conviction question should be mandatory. Some members felt that students with convictions would disclose voluntarily thus negating the need for a mandatory response. Future case law may also make this clearer.

RESOLVED:

6.3 **Approved:** the Criminal Convictions Declaration Policy and Procedure. StRAFC also agreed the following as part of the policy:

- (i) To continue to ask the criminal convictions question at the point of application for students on programmes requiring DBS checks;

- (ii) To ask all other students this question at the point of offer, though a response from students would not be mandatory (for review next year). Honest disclosure would be expected from applicants, but they would not be pursued for a response if a declaration was not made; and
- (iii) To add a member of the department concerned to the Criminal Conviction Panel and consider appropriate guidance and training for them.

Education Committee to be notified of the revised policy and it will be added to the Academic Manual.

Action: Bella Malins and the Secretary

7 ENABLING ONLINE PROGRAMME DELIVERY (ADMISSIONS) – PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ACADEMIC MANUAL (PAPER 1-05)

- 7.1 **Received** – Paper 1-05 regarding proposed changes to the Academic Manual to enable online programme delivery, introduced by the Director of Online Programmes, (OVPEA) who reported the following:
- a) The paper outlined proposed new admissions regulations to allow for planned and future online programmes. This would allow for four starting points each academic session for online programmes, one in each quarter of the year. This is an increase on the current regulations which allowed for two enrolment times in the autumn and January.
 - b) The paper identified three specific regulations which the proposed starting points proposal would at present be incompatible with and suggested new text for the online programmes. The proposed regulations were designed to mirror the existing regulations as closely as possible, though introducing more flexibility. If acceptable, this would allow for the four starting points.
 - c) Student and Registry Services were consulted on the proposed regulations and confirmed that the system would be able to support this.
- 7.2 StRAFC members were supportive of the proposals which would provide the flexibility needed to allow for online programmes. However, it was queried whether students on the online programmes would be eligible for funding and in particular for central awards. The Director of Online Programmes agreed to give this matter further consideration and discuss with the SFO.

RESOLVED:

- 7.3 **Approved:** the proposed amendments to Chapter 1 of the Academic Manual to enable four starting points for online programme each year. EdCom would be notified of the revised policy and it will be added to the Academic Manual.

Action: Susan Martin and the Secretary

8 NEW APPROACHES TO STUDENT RECRUITMENT MARKETING

(PAPER 1-06)

8.1 **Received** – Paper 1-06 (a-l) introduced by the Head of SRM. Paper 1-06 included a number of marketing insight papers for each faculty and SSEES. An additional annex also provided data from the New to UCL Survey on the questions around student reasons for choosing UCL.

8.2 The Head of SRM noted the following:

- a) The paper outlined the new approach from CAM to prioritise diversification of markets in order to enhance UCL student recruitment and to mitigate the effects of Brexit. It was intended to achieve this by tailoring marketing activities to the potential of the markets.
- b) CAM had used the Kano business model of customer satisfaction to gauge how well both CAM and faculties are meeting the basic needs of prospective students. Kano focusses on prioritising the “basic” (most important) needs of the key customers (departments and prospective students), as it considers the absence of meeting those needs to be most likely to lead to dissatisfaction. The enrolment data helped to identify the most important recruitment activities which could be prioritised and, with the New to UCL survey results, allowed faculties and CAM to focus on areas most influential to prospective students.
- c) CAM officers had liaised closely with faculties and had provided reports designed to assist them in their student number planning by identifying marketing strengths and weaknesses and opportunities for improving recruitment practice. The reports were being used in the student numbers planning round this year.

8.3 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) The new approach by CAM was well received by the Committee and it was noted that it had produced good liaison with the faculties. This relationship was crucial in ensuring that departments were able to improve and enhance their recruitment practice. The approach had improved liaison between CAM, the faculties and SRS and was also informed by the TOPS Community of Practice in student recruitment.
- b) It was suggested that CAM ensure that faculties were copied in to messages where it was dealing directly with departments, in order to ensure that they were part of the conversation with improved oversight.
- c) It was also suggested that faculty reports could help to inform student funding strategy to help identify the best groups of students to target.

RESOLVED:

8.4 That CAM continue to keep StRAFC updated on the progress of its new approaches to student recruitment marketing.

Action: Julie Rolls and CAM officers to note

9 FUTURE StRAFC ITEMS

(PAPER 1-07)

- 9.1 StRAFC noted a number of items that had been suggested for discussion in 2018-19 and outlined in Paper 1-07. Members were asked to forward any further suggestions to the Secretary.

10 STUDENT FUNDING OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

(PAPER 1-08)

- 10.1 The Head of the Student Funding Office introduced Paper 1-08, the SFO Annual Report 2018-19. The report provided an overview of the allocation for this academic session of centrally administered student funding awards. The Head of the SFO noted the following:
- a) Applications for centrally funded awards had declined by 7% on the previous year. This had been particularly acute for PGT applications which was attributed to the ending of the PG Support Scheme in 2017. However, UG applications had increased, though with fewer awards available this had increased competition for them.
 - b) There were fewer awards available for UK and EU PGT students. Over 411 new awards had been made for PGT students, but were mostly aimed at overseas students, with only 15 aimed at UK and EU. Securing new UK and EU awards was a key priority for the funding strategy.
 - c) In total, 4896 awards had been made for all levels of UCL students for the current year. The budget for central student funding was £13.7 million.
 - d) UCL continued to be one of the top recruiters for Foreign and Commonwealth Office Chevening programme with 184 students this year. There had been a decline in the number of scholars recruited through the other leading partnership schemes, with some such as the Mexican CONACYT scheme expanding the number of partnerships with other universities, thus increasing competition for their students.
 - e) Paper 1-08 also provided further details on the work conducted by the SFO in managing the awards and bursaries, which included an evaluation of the UG bursary, following guidance from the Office for Students. It was noted that the Access and Participation Plan Steering Group, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Provost Education (IOE), had oversight of the substantive bursary and widening participation projects, including recommendations on the bursary levels and income bands.
 - f) The Scholarships and Student Funding Strategy Steering Group was continuing to meet and would identify gaps in the market and make recommendations to StRAFC as appropriate. The group was also closely monitoring the Government's Augur review of post-18 education, which would also consider student funding.

10.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) It was noted that UCL spends some 33% of its tuition fee income on outreach, bursaries and other activities to offset the effect of the fees on students from poorer backgrounds. However, some of UCL's competitors spent more than this which may give them an advantage in attracting high quality students.
- b) The OfS was already challenging institutions to evaluate their bursary schemes and the levels of funding provided. This was likely to increase with the Augur review. It was noted that UCL's evaluation of its schemes was currently ahead of most of the sector and was enabling it to make strategic decisions, informed by strong evidence.
- c) The UCL evaluation had revealed that there was no consistent statistical differences between students with bursaries and those without in terms of retention, degree award and graduate outcome. However, the qualitative evidence indicated that there had been an effect on the student experience with bursary recipients stating that they were able to engage more fully in student life and extra-curricular activities.

RESOLVED:

10.3 **Approved** – the SFO Annual Report 2018-19.

10.4 **Agreed:** that the Access and Participation Steering Group continue to monitor both recruitment from the target Widening Participation and Access priority groups and the evaluation, following OfS guidelines, of the UCL bursary scheme.

Action: StRAFC members to note

11 StRAFC ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18 TO ACADEMIC COMMITTEE
(PAPER 1-10)

11.1 **Approved** – the StRAFC Annual Report 2017-18, to be submitted to Academic Committee.

12 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

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

- Tuesday 5 March 2019 (11am Room 106 Gordon House)
- Tuesday 25 June 2019 (11am Room B08, 1-19 Torrington Place)

Rob Traynor
StRAFC Secretary

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