



STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS AND FUNDING COMMITTEE

25 June 2017

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Mr Ian Bartlett, Ms Halima Begum, Professor David Bogle, Ms Cathy Brown, Professor Stela Bruzzi, Mr Neil Green, Ms Lesley Hayman, Dr Elinor Jones, Mr Kevin King, Ms Collette Lux, Ms Bella Malins, Professor Norbert Pachler, Ms Katy Redfern, Mr Tom Rowson, Dr David Stevens and Ms Olga Thomas

In attendance: Mr Rory Herron, Dr Leun Otten and Mr Rob Traynor (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms Wendy Appleby, Dr Simon Banks, Mr Mark Crawford, Professor Mark Emberton, Dr Julie Evans, Dr Michael Munday, and Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker

Key to abbreviations:

AC	Academic Committee
BEAMS	School of Built Environment, Engineering and Mathematical and Physical Sciences
CAM	Communications and Marketing
CDT	Centre for Doctoral Training
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
EdCom	Education Committee
IOE	Institute of Education
PGT	Postgraduate Taught
PGR	Postgraduate Research
SELCS	School of European Languages, Culture and Society
SLASH	School of Laws, Arts and Humanities, Social and Historical Sciences and SSEES
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRM	Student Recruitment Marketing
StRAFC	Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee
TOPS	Transforming our Professional Services
UG	Undergraduate

23 WELCOME AND CONSTITUTION 2016-17 UPDATE

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

- Professor Stella Bruzzi, Dean of Arts and Humanities (representing SLASH)

- Dr Simon Banks, Faculty Tutor, Engineering (representing BEAMS)
- Ms Cathy Brown, Senior Alumni Relations Manager, Students and New Graduates, Development and Alumni Relations
- Dr Elinor Jones, Admissions Tutor Statistical Science (representing BEAMS)
- Dr David Sim, Admissions Tutor History (representing SLASH)

23.2 The Chair also thanked Professor John Mullan, Dr Claire Maxwell and Dr Yvo Pokern and Dr Russell Hitchings for their contribution to StRAFC. A replacement member from the IOE was being sought to replace Dr Maxwell on the Committee.

24 MINUTES OF 9 MARCH 2017 MEETING

24.1 **Approved** – the Minutes of the StRAFC meeting held on 9 March 2017 [StRAFC Minutes 14-22, 2016-17].

25 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

25A The Graduate Experience: Prospectus and Application Portal (StRAFC Minute 16B, 09.03.17)

25A.1 StRAFC members had agreed at the previous meeting that funding to provide the prospectus and application portal should be recognised as a priority for UCL. It was reported that ISD had now received some funding for development of the portal.

26 ADMISSIONS UPDATE (PAPER 3-01)

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

- a) UG applications had increased by 6% overall compared to 2016, with increases to UK (+5%), Overseas (+9%) and EU (+1%) applications. This compared favourably with national trends, where total applications had decreased by 4% overall and for UK (-4%) and EU (-6%) applicants with only Overseas applications rising (+2%). Increases were also made in the number of offers at UCL and the conversion rate of offers to acceptances had also increased.
- b) However, there was some variability between departments and within faculties, with some receiving high application numbers (e.g. Computer Science and Biomedical Science) but others with significant declines (e.g. SELCS and the IOE Curriculum Pedagogy and Assessment). The modelling conducted by Access and Admissions indicated that a substantial number of near miss applications, some 600 anticipated, as well as some viring between departments would be required in order to meet the targets.
- c) Although there was still some time for the PGT applications to run, they had also risen in comparison with the same point in the previous session,

with increases to UK (+2%), Overseas (+17%) and EU (+6%). Numbers of offers and acceptances had also increased. However, it was reported that some of the faculty target figures were rather ambitious and this meant that for some areas viring would be required in order to meet them.

- d) PGR applications had decreased by 13% on the same point last year overall, though there had been a 2% increase acceptances of the offers made. MRes applications had followed a similar pattern.
- e) There had been some increases in affiliate application numbers, although offers were static for Exchange/Erasmus. Work was underway on the on-line affiliate application system, to also be used for the Summer School, with consultants engaged to develop this.
- f) Discussions were taking place with faculties and departments to agree how viring would take place and for taking near miss applicants for UG programmes. Access and Admissions had also been in discussions with UCL Estates on the space needs for the anticipated student numbers (both accommodation and for study) and there was greater joined up thinking across UCL on this in order to help provide a better experience for the applicants once they had registered.

26.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) It was noted that the Planning Office were considering the figures for future growth in student numbers, which included forecasting the demands for student accommodation and resources. The planned refurbishment of key buildings in the next few years (e.g. Ramsay Hall) would have an impact and plans were being drawn up with UCL Estates to mitigate against this. Proposals including offering students lower rents when living close to the building works.
- b) It was suggested that the PGR applications may have declined due to more applicants going through Centres for Doctoral Training. The CDTs were then selecting students before passing the applications on to the universities. CDT applicants were always difficult to track and Access and Admissions were in direct discussions on these applicants with the CDTs as necessary.
- c) It was queried whether the departmental admissions targets were too ambitious and noted that some faculties regarded them as more aspirational than others. However, unrealistic targets created difficulties for the planning and resource management of the student numbers and the Planning Office was engaging faculties in discussion around these issues. This included discussions on setting target deadlines earlier and possible earlier deadlines for PGT applicants, though there was some reluctance from faculties to make large changes. The SMT was also considering the targets in relation to the student experience and the resource implications and would consider the 2018-19 projections in the Autumn.

- d) It was further noted that some departments were cautious around target rates, especially those subject to external accreditations such as the Medical School, as there could be repercussions such as fines for over-recruitment.

RESOLVED:

26.3 **Approved:** paper 3-01, the Update on the Admissions Cycle.

27 UCL SUMMER SCHOOL - MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT UPDATE

(PAPER 3-02 – see also StRAFC Minute 18, 09.03.17)

27.1 **Received** – a paper and video presentation from the Student Recruitment and Liaison Officer (Summer School), who reported the following:

- a) The UCL Summer School Board had set a target of 350 students for 2017, following the low numbers (99) recruited in 2016, its first year (though it was noted that this was similar to the LSE and Kings College London first years of their summer schools). 384 students had enrolled and paid so far, an increase of 288% and it was possible that the final numbers could reach 400.
- b) The marketing strategy used to generate this interest in the Summer School had worked very well and had made full use of digital provision (a 43% increase of visits to the website following digital advertising campaigns), communications and improving relationships with partners both in UCL and externally, as well as overseas promotional activity such as study abroad fairs and conferences. The videos were watched more than 46,000 times.
- c) The strategy was data driven, using feedback from the first year participants and by using the Hobsons CRM to track interested students. The CRM enabled effective communication with prospective students and also recorded their details should they later apply for further study at UCL.
- d) UCL students and alumni were also involved in the campaign, acting as keen ambassadors to encourage students attend the Summer School.
- e) The Summer School target for next year was 550 students.

27.2 The following point was noted in the discussion:

- a) A key area to be reviewed before next year was the take-up on some of the modules offered, as 51 were on offer but only 28 had actually ran. This would consider how to better gauge demand and discussions would be held with faculties on how improve this.
- b) It was noted that the student ambassadors were very important in promoting the Summer School, as word of mouth was effective in recruitment. Though the numbers had been lower than planned in the first year, the feedback received from participants had been positive overall.

- c) StRAFC members congratulated the SRM officers and other staff involved and noted its strategic value for longer term recruitment, for PGT as well as UG levels.

28 SCHOLARSHIPS STRATEGY WORKING GROUP UPDATE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE
(PAPER 3-03)

28.1 **Received** – Paper 3-03 introduced by the Head of Student Funding who reported the following:

- a) The Group had held two productive meetings so far and agreed the scope of its work and the terms of reference, which were submitted for approval to the Committee.
- b) Benchmarking of provision had been conducted with other universities and the Group intended to factor in other UCL strategies, such as the Global Engagement strategy, into its deliberations.
- c) The Group intended to present a draft of the revised Scholarships and Student Funding Strategy at the first meeting of StRAFC in 2017-18.

28.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) It was queried whether PGR awards would be considered by the Group and noted that there had been no suggestions to make changes to this provision so far. The Group will liaise with the Doctoral School as necessary should this arise in its discussions.
- b) It was noted that the Group would also consider communications around scholarships and awards and was receiving valuable input from the Design and Communication Manager, who was the CAM representative on the Group. This included how information fed into the prospectus, its dissemination to faculties and departments and the importance of branding.
- c) The Group had also considered student feedback and noted how the New to UCL Survey had revealed that students were not clear about the different types of student funding available. The Group was discussing how better sign-posting might help to address this.

RESOLVED:

28.3 **Approved:** Paper 3-03, the Scholarships and Student Funding Strategy Group Update, including the scope of the Group and its terms of reference.

29 STUDENT RECRUITMENT MARKETING PLANS FOR 2017-18

29.1 **Received** – an update from the Director of CAM and the Director of SRM who outlined the plans for student recruitment marketing in 2017-18, which would review and seek input from UCL colleagues in its operation. The following points were noted:

- a) It was intended to review the first principles for student recruitment and to air new ideas, receiving input across UCL. This would also consider how the work of SRM and CAM linked into the UCL 2034 strategy and

other key institutional strategies. Input had been received at the SMT away day and CAM officers intended to visit faculty and department marketing and communications leads during the Autumn.

- b) There would also be a review of CAM objectives and how they worked in practice at its various levels, from the wider group to the teams and at individual level.
- c) This work would take place against a context of an anticipated tougher environment for student recruitment, with the full effects of Brexit still to come. The strategy for student recruitment would need to be renewed and refreshed against this, with a key objective to make UCL the student's first choice after Oxbridge.
- d) New suggestions to be explored included the way that information on programmes is presented to students, with consideration of a move to thematic promotion of programmes on-line (similar to web companies such as Amazon's marketing strategies, e.g. the use of "you might also like" suggestions). This would highlight similarities with programmes from different faculties (e.g. the wide number of programmes offering a political studies content at UCL) and not just group programmes according to faculty and department. This might reduce the need for viring of programmes in future.
- e) Other suggestions included marketing activities to follow a traffic light system highlighting where markets might need more attention and resources (red) to where they were already doing well (green) and the creation of a prospective student engagement point on the campus to act as a hub for recruitment.

29.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) Promoting programmes from different faculties with similar themes was clearly possible with the advances in digital resources. However, mapping of the programmes would need to be carried out and it would be important for programmes to work together. Lessons learnt from the Summer School in the module offer could be applied here. The work of Access and Admissions on campus tours could also help inform this and ensure that work with schools on widening access was not overlooked.
- b) It was suggested that better data would help faculties and departments in recruiting PGT students. For instance, the UG data allowed departments to see which institutions students were choosing ahead of UCL, but this was not available at PGT level. This was more difficult to obtain and a nuanced approach might need to be developed to enable this.
- c) Care would be required to ensure that the traffic light system for marketing did not shift resources away from already successful activities, e.g. Laws recruitment from Singapore. A direct approach was often required for recruitment from these countries and moving resources away from them could lead to departments losing their foothold in these markets. It was noted that the traffic light system would be used to help discussions and revise strategy and would not be used

to damage existing good practice. It could also be used to inform discussions on finance, the student experience as well as marketing.

RESOLVED:

29.3 That the Director of CAM and the Director of SRM provide an update on the student recruitment marketing plans and strategy at the next meeting.

Action: Collette Lux and David Stevens

30 TRANSFORMING OUR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES (TOPS): COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (STUDENT RECRUITMENT)
(PAPER 3-04)

30.1 **Received** – Paper 3-04 introduced by the Director of SRM, who reported the following:

- a) The first community of practice to be set up as part of the TOPS programme was on the topic of student recruitment. This drew staff together from across the professional services involved in student recruitment to seek ways to share knowledge, practice development and to consider careers pathways. Academic staff also became involved in the community of practice.
- b) Three planning workshops were held to scope the focus of the community, develop its vision and to consider actions, with two co-leaders appointed including the SRM Director and a representative from SLASH. A series of other events were held focussing on different areas of student recruitment, including topics such as mapping student recruitment and the implications of Brexit on student recruitment.
- c) A launch event was held on 14 June with over 80 attendees, and an address was received from the Provost and the Director of CAM.
- d) The community of practice was now working on the initial projects identified and bringing people together to share best practice.

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

31 COMPETITION AND MARKETS AUTHORITY ACTION PLAN
(PAPER 3-05 and StRAFC Minute 19, 09.03.17)

31.1 **Received** – Paper 3-05 introduced by the Director of Access and Admissions, who reported the following:

- a) Following the CMA Review Workshop, hosted by the SUMS Consultancy reported at the last meeting, further consideration had been given to the governance structures needed to manage this area of work.
- b) It had been proposed to establish a formal CMA Steering Group to replace the current working group, to be led by the Registrar and an Operations Group consisting of wider membership to coordinate the implication of the actions arising.

- c) It was proposed that the Steering Group should report to Education Committee as the university information the CMA were concerned with, was primarily concerned with programmes, which came under EdCom's remit.

31.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- a) It was noted that the CMA guidance in March 2015 expected universities to follow minimum standards for provision of information, fairness of its terms and conditions and complaints processes. The CMA had the power to impose unlimited fines should it find a university failing to meet these standards.
- b) The self-assessment work undertaken so far, had identified information on module as the area most at risk for UCL, with other more minor concerns identified such as the listing of academics qualifications and information on departmental webpages.
- c) It was intended that the Steering Group would also have student representation and involve UCLU staff with expertise in these areas, such as staff from Rights and Advice.
- d) It was suggested that it would be important to add compliance with the CMA guidelines to the Institutional Risk Register and that the level of risk meant that Academic Committee would be the more appropriate committee for the Steering Group to report to.

RESOLVED:

31.3 **Approved** – Paper 3-05, the CMA Action Plan and proposals to establish a Steering Group and an Operations Group to lead on the area at UCL. Further discussion would be required with the Chairs of AC and EdCom to decide to which committee the Group should report.

Action: Bella Malins and the Chair

32 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

32A Members Leaving StRAFC

33A.1 The Chair thanked the UCLU Welfare Officer Halima Begum for her contribution to the Committee and wished her well in her future endeavours.

33B Open Days

33B.1 It was noted that the UCL Open Days would be starting soon and run over the Summer: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/open-days>

34 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

34.1 The dates for the 2017-18 StRAFC meetings are as follows:

Monday 4 December 2017, 3pm (Haldane Room, Wilkins Building)
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]

30 August 2017