



## ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Thursday 13 December 2012

### MINUTES

*PRESENT:*

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Mr David Ashton	Professor Raymond MacAllister
Professor David Bogle	Ms Helen Matthews
Professor Robert Brown	Mr Dante Micheaux
Mr Edwin Clifford-Coupe	Mr Tim Perry
Dr Caroline Essex	Dr Hilary Richards
Dr Julie Evans	Ms Mary Rimington
Professor Mike Ewing	Professor Elizabeth Shepard
Mr Marco Federighi	Dr Ruth Siddall
Professor Anthony Finkelstein	Dr Eva Sorensen
Professor David Green	Professor Russell Viner
Dr Christine Hoffmann	Ms Susan Ware
Dr Arne Hofmann	Professor Jonathan Wolff

In attendance: Mr Jason Clarke (Secretary), Ms Judith Hillmore, Ms Harriet Lilley, Ms Bella Malins and Ms Fiona Strawbridge.

Apologies for absence were received from: President and Provost; Professor Steve Caddick; Dr Brenda Cross; Dr Leonie Hannan; Professor Alan Penn; Ms Olga Thomas.

*Key to abbreviations*

AC	Academic Committee
CALT	Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching
EdCom	Education Committee
ELE	E-Learning Environments
FTC	Faculty Teaching Committee
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
IQR	Internal Quality Review
JSSC	Joint Staff Student Committee
KIS	Key Information Set
MOOC	massive open online course
NSS	National Student Survey
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
PPD	Personal Professional Development
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QMEC	Quality Management and Enhancement Committee
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
SoP	School of Pharmacy
StARs	Student Academic Representatives
WP	widening participation

**13 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 18 OCTOBER 2012**

**Confirmed:**

- 13.1 The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 18 October 2012 [AC Mins. 1-12, 18.10.12], were confirmed by AC and signed by the AC Chair.

**14 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES** [see also Minute 15 below]

**14A Terms of Reference, Constitution and 2012-13 Membership** [AC Min.1, 18.10.12]

**Noted:**

- 14A.1 A copy of the revised Terms of Reference had been filed with the Minutes of the last meeting and the relevant information on the UCL committee web pages had also been updated.

**14B The National Student Survey** [AC Min.5, 18.10.12]

**Reported:**

- 14B.1 The AC Chair thanked those departments and faculties which had invited him to attend meetings with them to discuss the outcomes of the 2012 NSS. The range of ideas and good practice discussed at the meetings had been encouraging.

**15 REVIEW OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE AND ITS SUBSTRUCTURE** [AC Min.5, 18.10.12]

**Noted:**

- 15.1 Further to the discussion at AC's October meeting, a further report from the AC officers at AC 2-7 (12-13), setting out revised recommendations for action following the review of AC and its substructure, introduced by the AC Secretary.

**Reported:**

- 15.2 The report which had been submitted to the October meeting of AC<sup>1</sup> had contained eleven recommendations for action. AC had endorsed all of those recommendations, with one exception, namely that the constitution of AC should be reviewed, with a view to reconfiguring AC as a smaller, strategically focussed body. On that issue, the AC Chair had commissioned a broader review of UCL's governance structures and issues arising from that review might impact on the composition and function of AC. The outcomes of the review would be reported back to AC *via* an interim report in May 2013 and a final report in July 2013. The AC officers had agreed, therefore, that it would be premature to make any changes to AC until the outcomes of that broader review were known.
- 15.3 The recommendations at section six of the report at AC 2-7 (12-13) had changed little since the last meeting and AC was asked to endorse those recommendations for implementation in early 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> See the report at AC 1-2 (12-13)

**Discussion:**

- 15.4 AC members welcomed the broader review of governance structures and noted that encouraging debate above faculty level on educational issues, such as developing new programme proposals, should be considered in the review.
- 15.5 UCL Union Officers commented that recommendation (g) at section six of the report at AC 2-7 (12-13) regarding the student experience, should also seek input from the UCL Union's Educational Forum, and that recommendation (i) regarding consideration of the processes for reviewing the academic performance of faculties *etc*, should also include to what extent students are engaged in assessing the academic performance of their faculties. The AC Chair noted that StARs could be involved in discussions on academic performance at faculty as well as departmental level.

**RESOLVED:**

- 15.6 That AC approve the recommendations at section six of the report at AC 2-7 (12-13) for implementation in early 2013.

- more prospective students and their parents/guardians would be able to attend, particularly prospective students from WP backgrounds;
- students should be at the heart of higher education and UCL should be leading the way to ensure that this is the case.

16.6 Members of AC suggested that more coordination between the Undergraduate Recruitment Strategy and the Postgraduate Recruitment Strategy could aid in improving variable practices in taught postgraduate recruitment across UCL faculties. It was also noted that greater creativity was required to encourage current UCL undergraduate students to apply to postgraduate study, as previous attempts had been less successful than expected.

**RESOLVED:**

16.7 That AC approved the UCL UK Undergraduate Recruitment Strategy 2012-2017 at AC 2-8 (12-13).

**[ACTION: Ms Bella Malins – to note]**

**17 DRAFT UCL E-LEARNING STRATEGY 2012-2015**

*[Dr Fiona Strawbridge, Head of E-Learning Environments, attended for this item]*

**Noted:**

17.1 The draft UCL E-Learning Strategy 2012-2015 at AC 2-9 (12-13), introduced by Dr Fiona Strawbridge.

**Reported:**

17.2 The Strategy had been developed in line with the UCL Council White Paper<sup>2</sup>. Staff and students had been consulted on the Strategy, and strategies of other HEIs had been taken into consideration. During the development of the Strategy, the following regular themes had emerged:

- the importance of continued contact with academic staff;
- the value students place on connecting with other students to discuss ideas *etc*;
- the importance of creative learning;
- the importance of improved consistency in e-learning across UCL.

17.3 Although there was a Moodle presence for all taught programmes at UCL, it was not being used to its full potential - where some programmes provided students with innovative learning opportunities on Moodle, others used it at its basic level to store lecture information.

17.4 Staff from E-Learning Environments and the Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching would work with UCL schools, faculties and departments to help implement the Strategy. CALT and ELE staff would work with departmental E-Learning Champions to help identify good practice and to raise awareness of e-learning, as well as help Champions develop the departmental E-Learning Plan.

**Discussion:**

17.5 While AC members welcomed the Strategy and noted that it was an important issue for UCL, clarification was sought as to how outcomes would be measured. It was noted that key performance indicators were in place and actions were being monitored by colleagues in ELE. Members of AC also commented on the need for investment to ensure that the work planned for departmental E-Learning Champions could be carried out in full. It was also

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.ucl.ac.uk/white-paper](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/white-paper)

suggested that faculty-level appointments to provide hands-on delivery and access to higher levels of e-learning functionality, would benefit UCL as a whole.

- 17.6 It was noted that UCL should also look at the work of academics at competitor institutions, especially those overseas, to see how they are approaching e-learning and identify best practice. Distance learning and Massive Open Online Courses were also discussed by AC members, and the importance of (i) personalised teaching and (ii) the face-to-face student experience were noted. However, while the impact of MOOCs could not yet be evaluated, this potentially 'disruptive innovation' could not be ignored. It was suggested that a 'town meeting' or other forum for discussion about MOOCs be organised.

**RESOLVED:**

- 17.7 That AC approved the draft UCL E-Learning Strategy 2012-2015 at AC 2-9 (12-13).

**[ACTION: Dr Fiona Strawbridge – to note]**

**18 EDUCATION COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2011-12**

**Noted:**

- 18.1 The annual report from EdCom for session 2011-12 at AC 2-10 (12-13), introduced by the Chair of EdCom, Professor Mike Ewing.

**Reported:**

- 18.2 The AC Chair reported that he had requested that committees' annual reports should highlight three key issues which the committee had considered during the year in question.
- 18.3 The three key issues flagged in the annual report from EdCom were as follows:

- Engagement Monitoring – there was no UCL-wide method for monitoring students and departmental monitoring was restricted. The monitoring of postgraduate research students was noted as particularly difficult.
- Personal Tutoring and Personal Professional Development – the Personal Tutoring Scheme had been working well, but further work was required in ensuring greater consistency in approach between departments and faculties. Personal Tutors had access to good PPD support to assist them in structuring tutorials.
- School of Pharmacy Merger – the merger had generally progressed smoothly, although further alignment with UCL policies and procedures was still required and a working group had been established to ensure this took place.

**Discussion:**

- 18.4 AC members noted that engagement monitoring for students on interdisciplinary programmes was also difficult and enquired how UCL could better support monitoring on such programmes.

**RESOLVED:**

- 18.5 That AC approve the annual report from EdCom for session 2011-12 at AC 2-10 (12-13).

**[ACTION: Professor Mike Ewing, Ms Sandra Hinton – to note]**

## 19 RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2011-12

### **Noted:**

- 19.1 The annual report from RDC for session 2011-12 at AC 2-11 (12-13), introduced by the Chair of RDC, Professor David Bogle.

### **Reported:**

- 19.2 The three key issues flagged in the annual report from RDC were as follows:
- Overseas research student recruitment and admissions – overseas PhD students make a significant contribution to research at UCL but there appeared to be a lack of financial incentives at supervisor level to accept overseas PhD students. RDC noted that an increase in scholarships could help to address this situation. RDC had set up a Working Group to look into issues around marketing and admissions for overseas research students.
  - Part-time PhD Student Report – the report raised issues about fees increases for research students over the course of their study as well as differences in discounts for full-time students compared to part-time students, such as council tax and Transport for London ticket discounts. Work on such issues would be taken forward with UCL Union.
  - The Woolf Report – RDC had considered the findings of the Woolf Report, and although the Committee was confident that robust processes were in place, there were still some questions regarding guidance for supervisors on acceptable levels of help provided to research students. A Working Group would consider this further and report to RDC in 2013.

### **Discussion:**

- 19.3 AC members noted that it was difficult to define acceptable levels of help for PhD students, especially in the case of students for whom English is not their first language. It was also noted that this issue extended to taught students and it was suggested that further discussion on how to manage this matter for taught students could take place at EdCom.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 19.4 That AC approve the annual report from RDC for session 2011-12 at AC 2-11 (12-13).

**[ACTION: Professor David Bogle, Mr Gary Hawes – to note]**

## 20 JOINT STAFF STUDENT COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2011-12

### **Noted:**

- 20.1 The annual report from JSSC for session 2011-12 at AC 2-12 (12-13), introduced by the Chair of JSSC, Dr Ruth Siddall.

### **Reported:**

- 20.2 The three key issues flagged in the annual report from JSSC were as follows:
- Space and student numbers – overcrowding issues<sup>3</sup> and increased student numbers had been raised for discussion at JSSC. Overcrowding in lecture theatres

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<sup>3</sup> See also Minute 22A, Chair's Business - Room Booking and Timetabling Issues

*etc* raised safety issues and large student numbers put pressure on UCL facilities such as library study spaces and cluster rooms.

- Quiet Contemplation Facilities – although UCL was a secular university, there was a significant number of students with religious beliefs and who wished to observe the requirements of their faith. Although UCL had provided quiet contemplation facilities, there was still a need for ablution facilities, particularly for Muslim students. JSSC would like to have seen quiet contemplation facilities in the UCL Masterplan.
- StARs – UCL Union continues to support the StARs scheme and there was growing student interest in the scheme. Numbers of StARs have increased, although there were less StARs at faculty level.

20.3. The JSSC Chair also noted that a number of similar issues had been on the agendas of JSSC, RDC and EdCom, and that officers of these committees should discuss how their agenda items are managed so that activity was not duplicated.

***Discussion:***

20.4 AC discussed the quiet contemplation facilities and noted that new ablution facilities were in the process of being provided. AC members also noted that there were no facilities in the UCL area for UCL's growing number of Muslim students who required facilities close by for their prayer requirements and that more dialogue with local faith communities was needed as they too had a responsibility to their members.

20.5 AC members noted the overcrowding issues in lecture theatres but also noted difficulty and inefficiencies in booking spaces for non-academic activities, which were also seen by students as important. Although plans were underway for a designated Student Centre, which would help alleviate some of the issues with space and facilities, the Centre was not likely to be completed for a number of years.

***RESOLVED:***

20.6 That AC approve the annual report from JSSC for session 2011-12 at AC 2-12 (12-13).

that KIS definitions were rigid and that this could lead to low figures, the KIS would be very important to prospective students *etc.*

***Discussion:***

- 21.3 The Medical and Postgraduate Students' Officer, who had been a student member on an IQR team this session, commented that he had found the process very interesting, and had



- 24.2 Minutes from a FTC meeting in the Faculty of Engineering Sciences<sup>4</sup> had also been received but had not been noted on the list at AC 2-14 (12-13). A revised list would be filed with these Minutes.
- 24.3 The list of meetings of FTCs of which the Minutes have been received would, from 2013 onwards, go to EdCom for information.

## **25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

### ***Noted:***

- 25.1 The next meeting of AC would be on Thursday 21 March 2013 at 9.00am in the Haldane Room.

JDC  
March 2013

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<sup>4</sup> The FTC meeting took place on 7 November 2012.