



ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

10 May 2012

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Mr David Ashton	Dr Christine Hoffman
Professor David Bogle	Dr Arne Hofmann
Professor Robert Brown	Professor Raymond MacAllister
Mr Neil Chowdhury	Ms Helen Matthews
Dr Brenda Cross	Professor Alan Penn
Dr Caroline Essex	Dr Hilary Richards
Professor Mike Ewing	Dr Ruth Siddall
Professor David Green	Ms Olga Thomas
Mr Marco Federighi	Ms Susan Ware
Professor Anthony Finkelstein	

In attendance: Ms Karen Barnard; Mr Jason Clarke (*Secretary*);
Ms Harriet Lilley; and Mr William Wilson.

Apologies for absence were received from: President and Provost; Dr Bob Barber;
Ms Sue Bryant; Professor Steve Caddick; Dr Helen Chatterjee; Mr Luke Durigan;
Professor Nikos Konstantinidis; Mr Tim Perry; and Professor Michael Worton.

Key to abbreviations:

AB	Academic Board
AC	Academic Committee
AM	Annual Monitoring
AM 6 -2 TwSnu	150/P -3317

42 **MINUTES**

Approved

42.1 The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 22 March 2012 [AC Mins. 28-41, 2011-12], were be confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

43 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

[See also Minute 44 below]

43A **Semesterisation**

[AC Min.30A, 2011-12]

Noted

43A.1 The final report on the above had been submitted to the Provost for his consideration.

43B **Development of a 'Policy Zone'**

[AC Min.30B, 2011-12]

43E.2 At its last meeting, AC had received an oral report from the Chair of QMEC on key issues to emerge from this year's AM round. The QMEC officers were discussing a number of issues which had been identified by faculties in their Annual Monitoring reports with relevant CSS officers in order to agree how those issues could be addressed. The outcome of those discussions would inform QMEC's written report to AC on AM, which would be submitted to AC at its next meeting.

44 DEPARTMENTAL LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Noted

44.1 Academic departments had been requested to submit updated DLTSs to the Office of the Vice-Provost (Education). DLTSs were received from most departments and were reviewed by a small group chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education)/AC Chair.

Received

44.2 At APPENDIX AC 4/26 (11-12) – a report from the DLTS Review Group.

44.3 An oral report by the Vice-Provost (Education)/AC Chair.

Reported

44.4 The DLTS Review had been undertaken in order to (i) identify common themes and issues experienced by departments, and (ii) highlight how the Vice-Provost (Education) and his office could best support departments in relation to learning and teaching and related matters. Common themes arising from the Review included: inadequate teaching spaces; varying use of PGTAs by departments; and an increased interest in providing short courses and CPD programmes. The Review had also identified that some departments had not taken note of key institutional priorities set out in the UCL White Paper 2011-2021. Finally, there were issues with the DLTS template and accompanying guidance that would need to be resolved before any future iteration of the process. The Vice-Provost (Education) invited comments from AC members on the DLTS initiative and suggestions as to how this might be improved.

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- PGTA activities provided postgraduate students with valuable training opportunities and teaching experience. UCL should ensure that in all cases, the scheme benefitted both the students being taught and the PGTAs themselves; it should not be used as simply as an economical way of releasing academic staff from teaching duties.
- It was noted that different faculties adopted different business models and, therefore, the extent to which they make use of PGTAs might also vary. AC agreed that while the PGTA scheme should be sufficiently flexible to reflect legitimate local differences, there was a need to ensure that a common standard of training, support and guidance applied across UCL. It was agreed that the existing guidelines on the use of PGTAs¹ should be reviewed to ensure that common threshold standards are applied across the university.

RESOLVED

- 44.7 That AC welcome the report from the DLTS Review Group at APPENDIX AC 4/26 (11-12)

[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith, Ms Clare Goudy – to note]

- 44.8 That the Head of the Graduate School, in liaison with relevant officers, undertake a review of the current guidance to heads of department on the use of PGTAs and report back to AC in due course.

[ACTION: Professor David Bogle]

45 **LEAD OFFICER REPORTS**

[AC Min.34, 2010-11]

Noted

- 45.1 One of the recommendations approved by Council following the 2010 review of the UCL committee system was that in certain cases where a standing committee was to be disestablished, a 'Lead Officer' arrangement would be put in place. Under such an arrangement, the officer(s) with key responsibility for an area previously covered by a standing committee would, *inter alia*, prepare an annual report on developments within that area, which would be submitted to AC, AB and Council.
- 45.2 Lead officer arrangements were in place for the following areas:
- Careers and Employability;
 - Student Accommodation;
 - Student Welfare Co-ordination;
 - Research Strategy.
- 45.3 AC received and considered the Lead Officer reports on the above areas (with the exception of Research Strategy – see item 45D below) prior to their submission to AB and Council.

¹ Secretary's Note: The current guidance 'Guidance to Heads of Departments on Providing Teaching Opportunities for Postgraduate Research Students and Early Career Research Staff'

45A **CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY**

[Ms Karen Barnard, Head of the Careers Service, attended for this item]

Received

45A.1 At APPENDIX AC 4/27 (11-12) – the Lead Officer report on Careers and Employability, prepared by the Head of the Careers Service.

45A.2 An oral report by Ms Karen Barnard, Head of the Careers Service.

Reported

45A.3 Ms Barnard noted the following in particular in her oral report:

- This Lead Officer report detailed progress on careers and employability one year into the two-year plan. The objectives in the report were more proactive in comparison to previous years.
- Key objectives for 2011-13 included: developing further the UCL Talent Bank; embedding careers support in academic departments; developing departmental careers webpages for undergraduate students; provision of information and expectations of employability and careers support at UCL to prospective students and their parents/guardians; supporting alumni using the GradClub service; developing further the Skills4Work website and the provision of advice to international/postgraduate/research students.
- Many of the objectives of the Careers Services were consonant with the strategic aims set out in the UCL White Paper 2011-21.
- Results from the Association of Graduate Recruiters' Graduate Recruitment Survey 2012 showed that, contrary to media reports, the number of graduate vacancies in 2010-11 was

- 45A.5 The Head of the Graduate School commented that some Research Councils would require research students to take internships in two years time and a scheme was being set up to ensure this would be in place. It was likely that the internship requirement would be adopted by all of the Research Councils in due course.

RESOLVED

- 45A.6 That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Careers and Employability at APPENDIX AC 4/27 (11-12).

**[ACTION: Ms Karen Barnard, Mr Tim Perry
(as Secretary to Council) – to note]**

45B STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

[Mr William Wilson, Director of Student Accommodation, attended for this item]

Received

- 45B.1 At APPENDIX AC 4/28 (11-12) – the Lead Officer report on Student Accommodation, prepared by the Director of Student Accommodation.
- 45B.2 An oral report by Mr William Wilson, Director of Student Accommodation.

Reported

- 45B.3 Two discernible trends in student accommodation had emerged over the past few months. First, an active market in the provision of student accommodation was developing, with a number of new providers entering the market (some of whom had little or no experience of the specific issues involved in providing student accommodation). UCL would be working with these new providers where appropriate. Second, after a period of stable accommodation costs, there had been a noticeable increase in the cost of accommodation with the average price of a standard room increasing to £145 per week for a 50 week contract. It was highly possible that some students would face financial hardship as a result of these increases. Postgraduate students were more likely to opt for lower cost accommodation further away from UCL, compared to undergraduate students who tended to prefer more expensive accommodation closer to the main UCL campus.

Discussion

- 45B.4 The fact that the SLC allocates loans to students in equal instalments but student have to pay their rents in unequal instalments (currently two large payments and one small payment) might be causing anxiety for students in how they manage their finances – some Faculty Tutors reported an increase in the number of students seeking help due to financial worries. It was noted that students who are unable to meet rent deadlines could be eligible for financial assistance from UCL's hardship funds. However, the Medical and Postgraduate Students Officer noted that many students did not appear to be aware of this. It was suggested that aligning rent payments with SLC loan payments would address the underlying issue. The AC Chair noted that, within the context of the UCL White Paper 2011-21 which puts students at the heart at UCL, he would explore this issue further with the relevant officers and the UCL Union.

- 45B.5 AC welcomed the report and requested that future reports should include statistics on students reporting financial problems in meeting accommodation costs.

RESOLVED

- 45B.6 That AC welcome approve the Lead Officer report on Student Accommodation at report APPENDIX AC 4/28 (11-12).

[ACTION: Mr William Wilson, Mr Tim Perry (as Secretary to Council) – to note]

- 45B.7 That future Lead Officer reports on Student Accommodation should include statistics on students reporting financial difficulties due to accommodation costs.

[ACTION: Mr William Wilson]

- 45B.8 That the Vice-Provost (Education)/AC Chair explore with relevant officers the feasibility of aligning student accommodation payments with SLC student loan payments.

[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith]

45C **STUDENT WELFARE CO-ORDINATION**

Received

- 45C.1 At APPENDIX AC 4/29 (11-12) – the Lead Officer report on Student Welfare Co-ordination, prepared by the Dean of Students (Welfare).

- 45C.2 An oral report by Dr Ruth Siddall, Dean of Students (Welfare).

Reported

- 45C.3 The Dean of Students (Welfare) had established the Student Welfare Working Group, which meets biannually and acts as a forum for colleagues from different areas of UCL to meet and discuss trends and good practice in student welfare issues. The Dean of Students

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45C.13 Members of AC were concerned about the increase in the numbers of students dealing with stress and suggested that, and, in addition to tailoring support for mature Masters students, all departments should have embedded support available to all students.

45C.14 In response to a comment that UCL should be more flexible in managing arrangements such as exam timetables to help students suffering from high levels of stress, the Director of Student Services noted that the number of requests for special assessment arrangements had increased significantly but that these were often submitted at very short notice which made it less likely that such requests could be met.

45C.15 It was noted that the number of student cases being referred to Faculty Tutors and Personal Tutors involving mental health issues, including eating disorders, had increased. AC agreed that the Dean of Students (Welfare) should meet with the Dean of Students (Academic), the Director of Student Services, Faculty Tutors and any other relevant officers to look at the types of student cases which were being referred to staff and how these might be addressed.

RESOLVED

45C.16 That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Student Welfare Co-ordination at Accommodation at report APPENDIX AC 4/29 (11-12).

[ACTION: Dr Ruth Siddall, Mr Tim Perry (as Secretary to Council) – to note]

45C.17 That AC reiterate its support for the Gower Place medical practice remaining on the UCL campus.

[ACTION: Dr Ruth Siddall – to note]

45C.18 That the Dean of Students (Welfare), the Dean of Students (Academic) and the Director of Student Services meet with Faculty Tutors and any other relevant officers to discuss student health-related cases and to consider how these can be managed.

[ACTION: Dr Ruth Siddall, Professor Mike Ewing, Mr David Ashton]

45D RESEARCH STRATEGY

Noted

45D.1 Following the disestablishment of the Research Strategy Committee, it was agreed that the Vice-Provost (Research) would assume Lead Officer responsibility for this area of activity. AC therefore received at its May 2011 meeting a Lead Officer report from the Vice-Provost (Research), along with the Lead Officer reports for the areas above, which were then submitted to AB and Council at their subsequent meetings. Since then, a new reporting arrangement had been introduced for academic Vice-Provosts, under which they each submit a report annually to Council on matters falling within their remit. Consequently, the Vice-Provost (Research) would now be submitting a report to Council at its November meeting on issues relating to UCL's Research Strategy and related activities and initiatives. Following discussion between the AC and Council officers and the Vice-Provost (Research), it was agreed that in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of reporting and information, the Lead Officer

report on Research Strategy could be combined with the Vice-Provost's annual report to Council. The Lead Officer report from the Vice-Provost (Research) will therefore be submitted to, in turn, AC, AB and Council at their meetings in the Autumn Term 2012.

46 **PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE HEAR WORKING GROUP**

Received

- 46.1 At APPENDIX AC 4/30 (10-11) – a progress report from the working group established by AC to take forward the development of the HEAR.
- 46.2 An oral report by Professor Mike Ewing, as Chair of the Working Group.

Reported

- 46.3 Staff in RAS and UCLU had undertaken much of the work in progressing the HEAR at UCL. The HEAR Working Group was at this stage considering the types of activities which should be included on the HEAR. Professor Ewing drew the Committee's attention to item 11(g) on the progress report at APPENDIX AC 4/30 (10-11), and suggested that where departments ran their own activities, such as volunteering, the department should consider liaising with the Volunteering Services Unit so that the activity could be recorded centrally for the HEAR. The impact of the HEAR would be known in a few years, when the first cohort of students using the system had graduated.

Discussion

- 46.4 It was suggested that activities not covered by, or which did not easily fit into, the HEAR activity types might be recorded using an 'Other' category, although it would be necessary for UCL to be able to validate any such activities as qualifying for inclusion on the HEAR.

RESOLVED

- 46.5 That AC approve the progress report from the HEAR Working Group at APPENDIX AC 4/30 (10-11).

47 **REFORM OF A-LEVELS**

Reported

- 47.1 The Chair reported that following the Education Secretary's announcement that universities should play a larger role in determining the content of A-Levels to ensure they were fit-for-purpose, there would be discussions between Russell Group universities and examination boards. UCL had already been contacted by the AQA and Pearson to discuss how they could work together with universities.

