



## ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

5 July 2012

### MINUTES

*PRESENT:*

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Provost and President	Ms Helen Matthews
Professor David Bogle	Professor Ray MacAllister
Mr Neil Chowdhury	Professor Alan Penn
Dr Brenda Cross	Mr Tim Perry
Dr Caroline Essex	Ms Olga Thomas
Professor Mike Ewing	Dr Hilary Richards
Mr Marco Federighi	Ms Mary Rimington
Professor Anthony Finkelstein	Dr Ruth Siddall
Dr Christine Hoffmann	Ms Susan Ware

In attendance: Mr Jason Clarke (Secretary); Ms Harriet Lilley; Ms Bella Malins, Mr Dante Micheaux; Ms Julie Rolls.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr David Ashton, Dr Bob Barber, Professor Robert Brown, Ms Sue Bryant, Professor Steve Caddick, Dr Helen Chatterjee, Professor David Green, Dr Arne Hofmann, Professor David Price, Dr Peter Raven, Professor Stephen Smith and Professor Michael Worton.

*Key to abbreviations:*

AASG	Access Agreement Steering Group
A&H	Faculty of Arts and Humanities
AC	Academic Committee
AM	Annual Monitoring
AugAM	Augmented Annual Monitoring
CSS	Corporate Support Service
FES	Faculty of Engineering Sciences
FLS	Faculty of Life Sciences
FTC	Faculty Teaching Committee
GPA	Grade Point Average
ILTS	Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy
IQR	Internal Quality Review
MAPS	Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences
NSS	National Student Survey
QMEC	Quality Management and Enhancement Committee
RAS	Registry and Academic Services
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
ROASG	Recruitment, Outreach and Admissions Steering Group
SHS	Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
UPC	University Preparatory Certificate



Estates and Information Systems Division to clarify which issues noted by faculties were of a strategic nature and would therefore be looked at in the long-term, and which issues could be resolved in the short-term.

- 56.6 Officers would be considering how the AM, AugAM and IQR processes could be better aligned and how these could be coordinated with the process of preparing DLTSs in order to streamline these processes and to maximise their usefulness for departments and faculties.

### **Discussion**

- 56.7 The AC Chair noted that the need to improve the alignment of UCL processes such as AugAM and IQR had also been raised in the report from the Task Force on Innovations in Learning and Teaching and agreed that improving the alignment of processes would allow for better reflection by departments and faculties.
- 56.8 Members of AC noted that greater connectivity between UCL Estates and academic needs was required. Some members of AC enquired whether issues raised at School Estates Boards could include central estates issues.

### **RESOLVED**

- 56.9 That AC approve the evaluation report from QMEC on the 2011-12 AM and AugAM round at APPENDIX AC 5/33 (11-12).

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

## **57 ACADEMIC COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP ON THE GRADE POINT AVERAGE**

*[AC Min.33, 2011-12]*

### **Noted**

- 57.1 At its meeting on 22 March 2012, AC received the Working Group's preliminary report.

### **Received**

- 57.2 At APPENDIX AC 5/34 (11-12) – the Working Group's final report.
- 57.3 An oral report by Professor Mike Ewing, as Chair of the Working Group.

### **Reported**

- 57.4 The Chair of the GPA Working Group noted the following in his oral report:
- Investigation by the Working Group suggested that qualitative subjects, such as those in A&H and SHS, might find it easier to transfer over to the GPA system as examiners were more likely to be prepared to give an A or A+ for a piece of assessed work, while examiners in quantitative subjects, such as those in MAPS and FES, might find it more challenging to map marks out of one hundred onto the GPA standard terms such as 'excellent', 'good' or 'satisfactory' etc. A system was needed that would suit both qualitative and quantitative subjects.

- It would be helpful for UCL, especially with the first cohort of students on the BAsC programme starting in September 2012, to use one assessment system. The GPA Working Group proposed therefore, that a large-scale pilot involving all UCL departments *etc* be conducted in 2012-13 to examine how recent past awards would map onto the GPA system.
- Colleagues were undertaking a GPA modelling exercise in Laws, whose LLB programme was not under the harmonised scheme.
- The GPA Working Group would need to continue its work into 2012-13.

**Discussion**

- 57.5 Members of AC thanked the GPA Working Group for their work on the GPA, and enquired whether the GPA model would be used for postgraduate students. The GPA Working Group Chair noted that mapping postgraduate assessment to the GPA model was more complicated, due in part to the differences in GPA models used in the USA and the UK.
- 57.6 The Provost noted that UCL was looking to adopt the GPA system, an assessment currency used throughout the world, in order for UCL to be fully represented on the global stage.

**RESOLVED**

- The key findings and recommendations at 1.2 and 1.3 of the report at

### **Discussion**

- 59.4 Members of AC welcomed the definition and guiding principles for internationalisation of the curriculum at UCL, and commented that it internationalisation was a timely and important move for UCL. Some AC members enquired whether more detail on how to internationalise 'universal' subject matter would be available. The AC Chair noted that guidance was deliberately broad due to the variety of disciplines at UCL.

### **RESOLVED**

- 59.5 That AC approve the report at APPENDIX AC 5/36 (11-12).

**[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith – to note]**

## **60 PROPOSALS FOR HANDLING STUDENT HEALTH-RELATED CASES**

*[AC Min.45C, 2011-12]*

### **Noted**

- 60.1 At its meeting on 10 May 2012, AC received the Lead Officer report on Student Welfare Co-ordination from the Dean of Students (Welfare). During its discussion of the report, AC 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.
- 60.2 The Dean of Students (Academic), the Dean of Students (Welfare) and the Director of Student Services met to discuss this issue, together with the Acting Student Disability Co-ordinator.

### **Received**

- 60.3 At APPENDIX AC 5/37 (11-12) – a report on the outcome of the above meeting.
- 60.4 An oral report by Dr Ruth Siddall, Dean of Students (Welfare).

### **Reported**

- 60.5 Three main recommendations had emerged from the above meeting:
- (i) the Cause for Concern form<sup>2</sup> should be better promoted as it allows both staff and students to raise serious concerns about a possible student welfare issue. The form captures all the necessary information for the Dean of Students (Welfare) to take the issue forward.

- (iii) Student Learning Agreements should be used for students who had been identified as a cause for concern on welfare

grounds, and who were likely to benefit from continued registration at UCL.

***Discussion***

- 60.6 Members of AC welcomed the report and enquired whether there was training in student health issues available for staff. It was noted that staff could undertake the 'Identifying and Managing Student Mental Ill-Health' training programme run by Student Psychological Services.

letter that is currently sent to research degree students states that research degrees are four years in length *ie* three years in full registration and one year CRS status. The wording of the current offer

letter reflected a policy decision taken by the Head of the Graduate School, as Chair of RDC, in late 2010. A separate but related issue had also been raised about the offer letter which is sent to students on PhD programmes including an integrated MRes, which needs to be completed successfully before registration for the PhD or EngD can take place.

- 61.6 The Chair of RDC reported that the current policy on the duration of research study specified in the offer letter had been adopted in response to comments from across UCL that this was needed in order to ensure that Overseas students could apply for, and be granted, a visa covering the total period of their studies. If the offer letter were to state that the programme had a three-year duration, students would have to apply for a further visa after three years, which would be a time-consuming, expensive and stressful process for the students concerned. The Chair of RDC also requested that MAPS and FES confirm which overseas funding bodies had indicated that they would not provide financial support to applicants to UCL on the grounds of the wording of the current offer letter, as this problem had not been brought to his attention previously and it might be possible to discuss this directly with the agencies in question.

### **Discussion**

- 61.7 The Head of Outreach and Admissions noted that the alternative options of either issuing an offer letter specifying a three-year duration or offering a letter referring to a four-year duration could both cause potential difficulties for different reasons. It was suggested, therefore, that the current offer letter stating that PhD/EngD programmes have a duration of four years should be amended to include the following text which had been approved by the UKBA:

*“You are expected to be registered for three years. Under certain circumstances, you may be allowed to register for a fourth year in order to complete your research. If you are registered for a fourth year with the status of Completing Research Student you will not be charged a fee for that year.”*

- 61.8 The Head of Outreach and Admissions also noted that faculties had raised concerns about PhD students being sent two offer letters – one for the MRes (an exit point which must be completed before students can progress to the PhD award) and one for the PhD. As departments offered both the MRes and the PhD as separate programmes, UCL admissions systems had to generate two offer letters for students applying for the PhD, as they would also be awarded the MRes. Discussion around this issue was ongoing.
- 61.9 The Committee agreed that the suggested text at section 13 of the note at [APPENDIX AC 5/38 \(11-12\)](#) (see also 61.7 above) should be incorporated into the offer letter for prospective PhD/EngD students, and that RDC should discuss further the continuing issues around PhD students being sent two offer letters for the MRes and PhD programmes.

### **RESOLVED**

- 61.10 That the Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering Sciences write to the /Chair of RDC with details of those overseas scholarship agencies which have refused, or



indicated that they would refuse, to give financial support to UCL students because of the wording of the UCL offer letter.

**[ACTION: Professor Richard Catlow/Dr Caroline Essex and Professor Anthony Finkelstein/Mr Marco Federighi – to advise Professor David Bogle]**

61.11 That the text at section 13 of the note at APPENDIX AC 5/38 (11-12) (see also 61.7 above) be incorporated into the current four-year offer letter for prospective research degree students.

**[ACTION: Ms Bella Malins]**

61.12 That RDC discuss further the continued issues around PhD students being sent two offer letters for the MRes and PhD programmes.

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

## 62 OUTCOMES OF THE STUDENT BAROMETER SURVEY

*[AC Min.36, 2011-12]*

### **Noted**

62.1 At its meeting on 22 March 2012, AC agreed that its officers should arrange for a presentation to be made to the Committee on the Student Barometer survey before the end of the current session.

### **Received**

62.2 A presentation from Ms Julie Rolls, UCL International Office, on the outcomes of the autumn 2011 wave of the Student Barometer surveys.

### **Reported**

62.3 Ms Julie Rolls noted the following in her presentation:

- The Student Barometer survey has two waves of data collection – one in the autumn for students who have just started their studies and another in the summer for students who will shortly be finishing their studies.
- Data collected from students was provided voluntarily and anonymously, and questions asked in the survey covered all aspects of the student experience.
- Data are provided directly to institutions and not made public. Data could be broken down into different areas of interest or by faculty/department.
- UCL has been taking part in the Student Barometer since 2007 and influences and trends could be shown in the data collected from the past five years.
- UCL can request to be benchmarked against all (i) other universities taking part in the Student Barometer (ii) Russell Group universities and (iii) London universities. UCL cannot however be benchmarked against a specific university.
- iGraduate which runs the Student Barometer survey, presents its findings from UCL's data to a range of UCL stakeholders, and



64.1 At its meeting on 29 June 2012, EdCom received a paper from the Director of the Language Centre regarding UCL's position on the admission of UPC students to undergraduate degree programmes at UCL. EdCom endorsed the paper and agreed that it be forwarded to AC for approval.

64.2 A copy of the paper that was submitted to, and endorsed by, EdCom, together with a covering note from the EdCom Secretary, was at APPENDIX AC 5/44 (11-12).

**Reported**

64.3 The EdCom Chair reported that the recommendations in the paper at APPENDIX AC 5/44 (11-12) were a major policy shift for UCL, and that the recommendations requested that UPC students, who were UCL students, should be granted special consideration.

**RESOLVED**

64.4 That AC approved the paper at APPENDIX AC 5/44 (11-12) and the recommendations contained therein.

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

**65 RECRUITMENT, OUTREACH AND ADMISSIONS STEERING GROUP – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2011-12**

**Received**

65.1 At APPENDIX AC 5/40 (11-12) – ROASG's Annual Report for 2011-12.

**RESOLVED**

65.2 That AC approve ROASG's Annual Report for 2011-12 at APPENDIX AC 5/40 (11-12).

**[ACTION: Mr Gary Hawes – to note]**

**66 ACCESS AGREEMENT STEERING GROUP – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2011-12**

**Received**

66.1 At APPENDIX AC 5/41 (11-12) – AASG's Annual Report for 2011-12, including the proposed UCL Access Agreement for 2013-14.

**RESOLVED**

66.2 That AC approve AASG's Annual Report for 2011-12 at APPENDIX AC 5/41 (11-12), including the proposed UCL Access Agreement for 2013-14.

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

**67 INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY – IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: PROGRESS REPORT**

**Received**

- 67.1 At APPENDIX AC 5/42 (11-12) – the annual report on progress in implementing the ILTS.

**Reported**

- 67.2 The AC Chair reported that a mid-term review of the ILTS would take place in 2012-13. More information would be reported back to AC in due course.

**RESOLVED**

- 67.3 That AC approve the annual report on the implementation of the ILTS at APPENDIX AC 5/42 (11-12).

**[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith – to note]**

68 **REFORM OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE AND ITS SUBSTRUCTURE**

[AC Min.49, 2011-12]

**Noted**

- 68.1 The meeting of Chairs and secretaries of AC and its subordinate committees to review the effectiveness of the reforms which were introduced in autumn 2010 would be held on Thursday 12 July 2012. A note setting out the outcome of that meeting, and any proposed recommendation to send any proposals to the Academic Committee for its consideration, will be sent to the Academic Committee by 11.52 refBT/P MCID 15 BT.refBTa

- Meeting 1 - **Thursday 18 October 2012**, Haldane Room;
- Meeting 2 - **Thursday 13 December 2012**, Old Refectory;
- Meeting 3 - **Thursday 21 March 2013**, Haldane Room;
- Meeting 4 - **Thursday 9 May 2013**, Haldane Room;
- Meeting 5 - **Thursday 4 July 2013**, Old Refectory.