



ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Thursday 8 May 2014

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Provost and President (Chair)

Ms Wendy Appleby
Mr David Ashton
Dr Paul Ayris
Dame Nicola Brewer
Professor Robert Brown
Professor Steve Caddick
Dr Caroline Essex
Professor Mike Ewing

Dr Christine Hoffmann
Dr Arne Hofmann
Professor Raymond MacAllister
Dr Helen Matthews
Professor Alan Penn
Professor David Price
Dr Peter Raven
Dr Hilary Richards

Preliminary Business

18 CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP 2013-14

Noted:

- 18.1 AC noted with deep regret the recent death of Ms Mary Rimington after a long illness. Miss Rimington was Deputy Principal of City & Islington College and had been a member of AC since December 2004. The Provost asked Mr Peter Murray, who was representing CIC at the meeting, to convey UCL's condolences to her friends and colleagues at CIC.
- 18.2 AC noted that the following members had joined the Committee since its last meeting:
- Dame Nicola Brewer, Vice-Provost (International);
- Ms Wendy Appleby, Registrar;
- Ms Sheila Nuttall, City & Islington College.
- 18.3 Dr Jennifer Rodd, Faculty Postgraduate-taught Tutor for the Faculty of Brain Sciences, was representing the Faculty at the meeting as the Dean, Professor Thompson, and the Faculty Tutor, Dr Evans, were both unable to attend.
- 18.4 The Provost noted that the SLASH Deans had sent their apologies as the School's Academic Promotions Committee had been scheduled to meet at the same time as the AC meeting. The Provost noted the importance of AC in UCL's academic governance structure and made clear that he expected all members to make every effort to attend. He did not, therefore, expect to see similar timetabling clashes occurring in future.

19 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 10 DECEMBER 2013

Confirmed:

- 19.1 The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 10 December 2013 [*AC Mins. 9-17, 10.12.13*].

20 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

20A National Student Survey [*AC Min. 10A, 10.12.13*]

Noted:

- 20A.1 The update report from the Vice-Provost (Education) on the NSS would be submitted to the next meeting.

Reported:

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20B Research Student Fee Payments [AC Min.11A, 10.12.13]

Noted:

20B.1 At its last meeting, during its discussion of the Annual Report from JSSC for session 2012-13, AC noted the issue of the number of fee payment points for self-funded research students and asked to receive a progress report in due course.

20B.2 This issue had been discussed again by JSSC at its meeting on 13 March 2014. The relevant extract from the unconfirmed Minutes of the JSSC meeting was, for information, at [AC 3-13 \(13-14\)](#).

20C Development of the UCL estate [AC Min.15.2, 10.12.13]

Noted:

20C.1 At its last meeting, the Provost had noted that announcements would be made regarding the development of the UCL estate, including the redevelopment of parts of the main Bloomsbury campus. An announcement had been made on the UCL website on 10 April and was available at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/estates-news/estates-buildings-news/transforming-ucl>.

<i>Business for Discussion</i>

21 UCL 2034

Received:

21.1 A copy of the UCL 2034 Strategy at [AC 3-14 \(13-14\)](#) (also available at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-2034>) presented by the Provost.

Reported:

21.2 The Provost explained that while the UCL 2034 Strategy sought to build on the Council White Paper 2011-21, it was different in a number of key respects:

it covers a longer timeframe than many university strategic plans and looks beyond the next 10 years. Given its level of performance and global position, it was possible for UCL to look ahead to the next 20 years, whereas this would not be possible for all other institutions;

it strengthened the emphasis on education and the student experience, particularly a renewed focus on research-based teaching;

it addressed more explicitly UCL's role as a key player in London and at the heart of a cluster of higher education activity in the South-East of England. This would also include UCL's relationship with, and sense of responsibility to, its local community, as embodied in the vision for the Stratford development;

it trailed a revamp of UCL's International Strategy, to be led by Dame Nicola Brewer, which would reinforce UCL's position as 'London's Global University';

there was a strong emphasis on the concept of good partnership working, which would cover not just collaborations with overseas partners, but also working with other universities, the NHS, industry, government and funding bodies *etc*, as well as UCL's staff, students and alumni.

Discussion:

- 21.3 AC was invited to discuss the strategic themes set out in the UCL 2034 Strategy, as well as the implications for different areas within UCL. The main points noted during the discussion are noted below at Minutes 21.3.1 – 21.3.9.
- 21.3.1 The emphasis in the Strategy on education and the student experience in its broadest sense was endorsed strongly by AC. Developments such as the Connected Curriculum initiative were designed to realise these ambitions and it was suggested that the Strategy could include more references to issues relating to curriculum design and review.
- 21.3.2 The emphasis at different places within the Strategy on different aspects of lifelong learning and continuing professional development was welcomed, and fitted well with existing plans within some faculties to expand their activities in these areas. The successful launch of the UCL Academy was also seen as a key contribution to this area.
- 21.3.3 The Strategy was seen as providing a guiding document for schools and faculties as they develop their local long-term academic strategies. Members noted that ensuring that UCL has in place modern IT systems as well as efficient administrative processes, and that the Professional Services are appropriately resourced would all be necessary to enabling the achievement of the academic objectives in the Strategy. The Provost agreed that this would be key to ensuring the successful implementation of the Strategy.
- 21.3.4 There was a call for the International Strategy to focus on the position of international students studying at UCL as well as on UCL's activities, operations and partnerships in other countries. Ensuring that UCL's future international alumni have a rich and rewarding experience at UCL would help to boost UCL's reputation abroad.
- 21.3.5 In relation to widening participation, while the current draft of the Strategy referred to UCL working with schools, there was no mention of UCL's links with colleges, which play a key role in this area. The Provost agreed that this was an omission which would be rectified in the final version of the Strategy. The whole area of widening access and participation and the role that higher education could play in aiding social mobility was one to which he was personally committed; there was a range of issues in this field that he wished to explore in more detail with colleagues from across UCL.
- 21.3.6 A member of AC asked that improving efficiency in UCL's processes and operations should not lead to uniformity being imposed on faculties or a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, and that a plurality of approach in implementing the Strategy should be allowed.
- 21.3.7 One of the UCLU officers expressed concern about the notion of students being referred to as 'customers' when, in his view, students should be seen as 'partners' or 'colleagues'. The Provost observed that this language had been used as it was recognised that in some areas of UCL there was a recognition that the principle of 'customer service' needed to be embedded more deeply and that UCL needed to provide high-quality and professional services to the academic community.

However, he agreed entirely that UCL should not refer to its students as ‘customers’ as this did not convey the relationship that a university should seek to have with its student body.

21.3.8 It was noted that there was a need for UCL to focus more on its postgraduate-taught provision and on the issues impacting on the experience of these students, which were different in many ways from those affecting undergraduate students.

21.3.9 The Provost noted that consideration had already been given to the implementation of the final Strategy and this would be discussed in depth at a forthcoming extended SMT meeting, which would involve Vice-Provost, Deans and the Heads of Professional Services. It was envisaged that members of the SMT, along with Heads of Professional Services, would lead on particular themes or projects arising from the Strategy document. It was intended that the final version of the Strategy and, in due course, further information on progress in implementing its objectives, would be web-based, so that it could be accessible to staff and students.

21.4 The Provost thanked members for their comments which would be taken on board when the next iteration of the Strategy was developed.

<i>Business for Information</i>
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22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted: