



Academic Committee

Thursday 14th March 2024, 10:00am

Minutes

Present Members:

President and Provost (Chair); Professor Kathy Armour; Dr Karen Barnard; Professor David Bogle; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Ashley Doolan; Daniel Farrell; Dr Hugh Goodacre; Dr Christine Hoffmann; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Zak Liddell; Blathnaid Mahony; Professor Ivan Parkin; Professor Geraint Rees [for Minutes 1-3]; Dr Suzanne Ruddy; Professor David Shanks; Professor Stephanie Schorge; Dr Michael Short; Professor Eloise Scotford; Dr Francesca Scott; Professor Alice Smalley; Professor Anthony Smith; Professor Olga Thomas; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Dr Zachary Walker; Dr Kathryn Walsh; Professor Nicola Walshe; Professor Li Wei

Apologies:

Dr Paul Ayriss; Shaban Chaudhary; Professor Mark Emberton; Dr Julie Evans; Professor Jacqui Glass; Ahmad Ismail; Professor Christoph Lindner; Professor Allison Littlejohn; Angharad Milenkovic; Professor Aeli Roberts; Mike Rowson; Issy Smith; Professor Rosalind Smyth; Kirsty Walker

In attendance:

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Lynn Ang, Vice-Dean Research, IOE – UCL's Faculty of Education and Society

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Iain Borden, Vice-Dean Education, Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Parama Chaudhury, Pro-Vice-Provost (Education – Student Academic Experience)

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Cathy Elliott, Vice-Dean Education, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Bronwen Evans, Vice-Dean Research, Faculty of Brain Sciences

For Minutes 1-15: Dr Clare Goudy, Chief of Staff, Provost's Office

For Minutes 1-15 Professor Sue Hamilton, Vice-Dean Research and Global Engagement, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Katherine Holt, Vice-Dean Education, Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Liz Jones, Vice-Dean Education, Faculty of Engineering Sciences

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Peter Munro, Vice-Dean Research, Faculty of Engineering Sciences

For Minutes 1-15: David Pacey, University Secretary

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Paola Pedarzani, Vice-Dean Education, Faculty of Life Sciences

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, Vice-Dean Education, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Andrew Wills, Vice-Dean Research, Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Steve Wilson, Vice-Dean Research, Faculty of Life Sciences

For Minutes 1-15: Professor Peter Zusi, Vice-Dean Research, Innovation and Enterprise, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

For Minute 6: Martin Moyle, Director of Services, LCCOS

For Minute 6: Professor Vivek Mudera, Chair of Library Committee

For Minute 12: Stephanie Esuola, Programme Director, Recruitment and Admissions

For Minute 12: Clare Foyle, Head of Strategic Delivery Account Management

For Minute 12: Marie Gallagher, Director of Operations

Officer:

Rachel Port, Governance Manager: Research Integrity

Part I: Preliminary Business

1. Welcome

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed all members to this meeting as well as the Faculty Vice-Deans for Research and Education who had also been invited to attend. This meeting was to act as a review of research and education activities at UCL over the past year as well as the work of Academic Committee (AC)'s sub-committees and cover some operational business.

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

2. Review of Research at UCL

- 2.1. Professor Geraint Rees, Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement) gave an oral report on UCL's research activities over the past year and the following points were made during the presentation:
 - a. UCL was a global research powerhouse and currently had some £2.96bn of research grants under its management across some 4,500 awards.
 - b. UCL was also at the forefront of innovation with £2.7bn external investment in spinouts.
 - c. UCL also made some 2,500 external contract requests each year.

- d. Over the past year the remit of RIGE had expanded to include Research and Innovation Services (RIS) and the UCLH/UCL Joint Research Office (JRO).
- e. Research and Innovation Culture: The upcoming REF2029 exercise would include the assessment of People, Culture and Environment (PCE) and research culture would be a key part of this exercise. UCL Research Culture had developed a 10-year Roadmap that defined five themes. UCL had also launched UCL Profiles which showcased the UCL community and their research.
- f. Infrastructure: Researchers, mainly in the STEM areas, were encouraged to consider UCL's Research Technology Platforms that underpinned its research activities. UCL also had a very large number of facilities within a very small space. Work had been undertaken with the academic community about the best way to distribute and consolidate UCL's biological services. Consideration would need to be given to making investment in the Royal Free's Biological Services Unit that could potentially free up space on the UCL campus.
- g. Research contracts: Since 2019/20 there had been a 55% increase in new contracts across UCL. There had been concern about the number of open contracts and the time it took to complete. Contracting involved many colleagues from across UCL and UCL Change and Improvement would deliver service transformation in this area and were currently in phase 2 of their programme.
- h. The impact of some early initiatives had seen: the staff vacancy rate in Research Contracts decrease from 44% to 0%; additional contractor resources being made available in the Faculties of Life Sciences, Medical Sciences and Population Health Sciences who had a high volume of contracts; and reduced turnaround times.
- i. European research and innovation funding: The Windsor Framework – part of Horizon Europe – was signed in March 2023 and the Horizon accession was granted in January 2024. UCL's application rate for Horizon funding was being restored and researchers were encouraged to apply often and early for funding.
- j. Global connections: UCL visits had taken place to Japan and India. In terms of strategic partnerships, India was a major market for diversification of the student body and it was keen to do work in the areas of AI and medical science. In relation to engagement with China, it was commented that this presented a co-ordination challenge for UCL but that Global Engagement could help to present a more joined-up approach. UCL was also starting to develop strategies for engagement with China, Europe, India and Africa.
- k. Trusted Research (and innovation): At present there was an increased focus on national security and the UK Cabinet Office had set out the legal framework within which institutions had to operate. UCL had set up a due diligence process for third party organisations within Compliance and

Assurance in RIS and it had handled 780 cases to date with only 3% of those presenting as high risk.

- l. Impact through Intellectual Property and Consultancy: UCL Business had raised £2.85bn inward investment from its spinouts in 5 years. UCL Consultants had generated an overall income of £43m in 2022/23 and the total funds returned to UCL stood at £23.3m. Key drivers for growth had been large-scale projects for the UK Department of Education and international capacity development projects.
- m. UCL Consultants also offered bespoke short courses and had increased its focus on an executive education offer in partnership with UCL's Global Business School for Health and the School of Management.

2.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

- a. Members noted UCL's great performance in its research and innovation activities over the past year.
- b. It was commented that there were also issues in the social sciences areas and that it would be useful to get orthodoxy in such documents and presentations as in other teaching and learning documents. The central role of social sciences was acknowledged and that UCL Economics had gained significantly from UKRI's SHAPE funding. One issue concerned researchers on sabbatical in the arts and social sciences areas who were preparing monographs for submission to REF2029 where it was known there was a long lead in time to publish such outputs as Open Access so they were eligible for submission.
- c. It was difficult to address the issues of research space and creating a research culture identity via the UCL estate. However, UCL Estates were considering research space in their Masterplan in terms of creating neighbourhoods.
- d. It was considered that there was a need to be thoughtful about space as at certain times of the year it was in high demand across campus whilst at other times there was more available space. The co-location of researchers was important but it did not in itself create a research community.

3. Review of Education at UCL

- 3.1. Professor Kathy Armour, Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience) gave an oral update report on UCL's education and student activities over the past year and the following points were made during the presentation:
 - a. The Office of the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience) worked closely with UCL Students' Union who were praised for their work. UCL had increased its student numbers but this was not currently being matched with increased student study space. A refresh of UCL's teaching rooms was currently underway.
 - b. Feedback and Assessment: Under the last Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise, UCL did not achieve Gold for student

experience due to issues around the timeliness and quality of its feedback and assessment of student work.

- c. Personal Tutor Review: The TEF Panel also noted some gaps in personal tutoring at UCL. The workload for Personal Tutors was noted and that the role had changed since its inception. The Review Group had recommended that such roles focus on student academic support rather than also covering wellbeing concerns and any other non-academic issues. New role descriptors and the provision of more training would be implemented with effect from next session.
- d. Programme Excellence: The aim of the project was to achieve consistent quality across the entire portfolio of programmes and the student experience. There were two workstreams looking at portfolio review and curriculum review respectively. UCL aimed to offer students something innovative and special, especially for those students in term 3 whose studies were not as busy as on other programmes of study. One idea was to have Extended Learning Opportunities groups.
- e. Digital and AI: Consideration was being given to in-person digital exams, as well as the feasibility of an external company being based at the Excel centre to offer laptops to student for use in such exams.
- f. Digital Systems – improvements: A new curriculum information management platform was being procured for roll-out in early 2025. It would be transformative and improve staff satisfaction and reduce workload effort. Dashboards were also being built for tutors and students, and assessment-related improvements would be made to Moodle.
- g. Quality and Standards: The Degree Outcomes Steering Group was addressing the issue of grade inflation. The Internal Quality Review (IQR) process had been revised to be more risk based, data-led and have stronger student input. The PGTA (Postgraduate Teaching Assistant) Review was also underway to assess their workload compared to others in the sector.
- h. Student and Registry Services (SRS): A high volume of activity was being undertaken in SRS by its Education Services team that included an Academic Policy, Quality and Standards service, whilst its Student Operations team was undertaking major work to improve data structures and reporting.
- i. Access and Participation Plan (APP): UCL's Plan was due for submission in May 2024. All institutions were required to have an APP which would be subject to robust evaluation and focused on the entire student lifecycle. Work was also being undertaken around attainment raising in under-16s by targeted outreach to underrepresented groups.
- J. HEDS (Higher Education Development and Support Institute): UCL Careers and Arena were now co-located . UCL would hold its Education Conference on 17th April 2024 and had attracted some good speakers to talk about schools as well as the world of work.

3.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

- a. It was suggested that Moodle should be able to produce reports about when feedback and assessment was provided to students. However, there was an inconsistent approach across UCL to using Moodle as not all dates were on the system.
- b. It was noted that quality and standards and wellbeing pulled in different directions and that, for example, assessments undertaken in large student groups would still need to ensure adequate support was provided for students.
- c. In terms of the IQR process, one member considered that the IQR Panel that followed up on individual panels' recommendations and sought planned actions from the department under review was a very effective process. However, it was found that the actions did not always result in the planned outcomes.
- d. It was observed that increasing student numbers made it difficult to meet deadlines for feedback and assessment whilst maintaining consistency and quality. It was suggested that staff should use greater simplification by reducing the number of assessments and amount of coursework on their modules/programmes. Experimenting with verbal rather than written feedback might also help in this regard.
- e. Overall, it was felt that teaching was becoming more demanding. At the same time, student loans were expensive which resulted in students having increased expectations which increased staff workload.

4. Overview of Education Committee (1-01)

- 4.1. The Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience) gave an oral report on the work of Education Committee (EdCom). The following points were made during the presentation:
 - a. EdCom was a hardworking committee and constantly undertaking various activities/projects with members doing extra work.
 - b. It had completed the 2023 TEF submission and implemented the 2022-27 Education Strategy.
 - c. EdCom had enabled Boards of Examiners to continue to award and progress students impacted by the Marking and Assessment Boycott where they felt academic standards could be upheld.
 - d. It had agreed changes to the student representation regulations, which resulted in freeing up time in meetings for meaningful engagement.
 - e. It also introduced a new method of local quality enhancement with the Department and Faculty Education Plans.
- 4.2. AC approved the Education Committee Annual Report 2022-23.

5. Overview of Research Degrees Committee

- 5.1. Professor David Bogle, Pro-Vice-Provost (Doctoral School and ECR Staff) and Chair of Research Degrees Committee (RDC) gave an oral report on the work of the committee. The following points were made during the presentation:
- a. RDC's membership included a range of UCL officers including Faculty Graduate Tutors as well as elected members from AB that met once each term. It also had two working groups, one on Research Degree Regulations and the other on Double and Joint Degrees.
 - b. RDC's regular business included looking at admissions, exam statistics, student complaints and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results. Changes to relevant student regulations, new programmes of study, admissions updates and suspension of regulations were considered at each meeting.
 - c. RDC discussion topics in 2022-2024 included diversity; PGTA contracts; posthumous degrees; additional fee element; and the Admissions Transformation Programme, that would now include research student admissions.
 - d. RDC had also contributed to the development of the revised UCL Student Academic Misconduct Procedure that was considered to work well for research students as well as taught students.
 - e. RDC had also considered PhD student attendance rates and felt that they were losing research excitement due to working from home more following the Covid pandemic.

6. Overview of Library Committee (1-02)

- 6.1. Martin Moyle, Director of Services, LCCOS (Library, Culture, Collections and Open Science) gave an oral report on the work of Library Committee (LC). The following points were made during the presentation:
- a. LC's work over the past session had focussed on the three key areas of: developing the LCCOS Strategy 2024-27; UCL Press; and UCL East Library.
 - b. LC had been very helpful in developing the LCCOS Strategy that had six key themes that included supporting student success; accessible collections; and arts and culture.
 - c. In terms of supporting student success, the 2022/23 National Student Survey results gave a 92% satisfaction/positivity score for UCL's library provision. However, investment was needed to update and increase the quantity of learning spaces on the main UCL site in Bloomsbury, especially during exam time. The UCL Library was the 2nd busiest library in the UK and whilst learning spaces would become available in the IOE Library, the issue of collection versus student study space at central sites required further consideration.
 - d. In terms of arts and culture, LCCOS was working with academic colleagues across UCL to develop a pan-UCL statement on the value of

the arts and culture to the UCL experience, including student cultural life, and was keen to create hands-on opportunities for students to engage with objects from its museums and collections.

- e. LC would also address accommodation issues for UCL's Special Collections that included the Petrie Museum. The feasibility of it being moved to UCL East would be considered whilst UCL's archives would be moved from Kew back to London/UCL.
- f. In terms of UCL Press, there were new mandates from UK research grant funders for Open Access monographs and LCCOS had started to explore consortial funding models for the textbook programme.
- g. UCL East Library opened in September 2023 with 161 learning spaces and it offered mainly digital provision for course readings. Student feedback to date had been very positive on the Marshgate Library.

6.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

- a. In response to a query, LCCOS was keen to expand and extend its UCL Press provision and hoped to be able to submit a business plan proposal to grow that activity.
- b. In terms of tracking hard copies of UCL books on loan, it was noted that they were not attributed to individual students but the trend was that physical loans were really decreasing compared to the 18 million articles/book chapters in electronic format that UCL loaned out annually.
- c. It was acknowledged that e-books were very expensive, but the Library was continuing to buy print copies.
- d. In terms of relocating Special Collections, it was commented that the Petrie Museum had connections with the Bloomsbury area and any move could impact on the objects that shifted with it. It was noted that the Petrie Museum did require alternative accommodation as it was the 4th best Egyptian collection in the world but was currently housed above a pizza shop which was not ideal.

6.3. AC approved the Library Committee Annual Report 2022-23.

7. Closing remarks

7.1. The Chair gave an oral report on the presentations received and made the following points:

- a. The Chair remained amazed by the quality of work undertaken across the institution and noted that UCL was trying to achieve much despite external changes and challenges.
- b. The Chair was also grateful for the quality of leadership across UCL but noted that it needed to remain mindful of the workload issues across the institution, given time to reflect drove the quality of teaching and research.

Part III: Further Strategic Items for Discussion

8. Academic Committee Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2023-24 (1-03)

8.1. AC approved its Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2023-24.

9. Academic Committee Sub-Committees Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership (1-04)

9.1. AC approved its Sub-Committees Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2023-24.

10. Minutes of the last meeting

10.1. AC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2023 [Minutes 15-29, 2022-23].

11. Matters arising from the Minutes

11.1. There were no matters arising.

12. Recruitment and Admissions Committee Terms of Reference (1-05)

12.1. AC received the Recruitment and Admissions Committee Terms of Reference.

Part IV: Other Business for Approval or Information

13. Academic Committee Annual Report to Academic Board and Council 2022-23 (1-06)

13.1. AC approved its Annual Report to Academic Board and Council 2022-23.

14. Reports from Academic Committee sub-committees

14.1. AC received the following sets of minutes:

- a. The minutes of Education Committee, 5 June 2023; 27 June 2023; 24 July 2023; 25 July 2023; 25 September 2023; 17 October 2023; 16 November 2023; 6 December 2023; 1 February 2024 (unconfirmed).
- b. The minutes of Library Committee, 7 February 2023; 23 May 2023; 3 November 2023.
- c. The minutes of Research Degrees Committee, 23 May 2023; 31 October 2023.

15. Date of next meeting

15.1. The next meeting of Academic Committee would be held on Thursday 4 July 2024 at 10:00am – 12 noon on MS Teams.

Rachel Port
Secretary to Academic Committee
July 2024