Education Committee

Thursday 26 September 2024

Minutes (Confirmed)

Present:

Professor Kathleen Armour (Chair)

Ms Karen Barnard; Professor Parama Chaudhury; Mr Shaban Chaudhury; Ms Sarah Cowls; Mr Ian Davis; Professor Sally Day; Mr Daniel Farrell; Mr Ben Fowler; Ms Katherine Fletcher; Dr Paul Greening; Ms June Hedges; Professor Liz Jones; Professor Sandra Leaton-Gray; Mr Zak Liddell; Ms Blathnaid Mahony; Professor Margaret Mayston; Dr Jennifer McGowan; Mr Trevor Pearce; Professor Paola Pedarzani; Professor Mary Richardson; Professor Aeli Roberts; Dr Francesca Scott; Dr Hazel Smith; Ms Jo Stroud; Professor Olga Thomas; Professor Ulrich Tiedau; Dr Nalini Vittal; Dr Kathryn Woods and Ms Eda Yildirimkaya.

In attendance: Ms Jenny Austin, Ms Esra Celik and Mr Tom Flynn (Item 6); Professor Alan Parkinson and Mr Iain Hanson (item 8); Ms Siobhan Fitzgerald (Item 11); Mr Ashley Doolan (Secretary) and Mr Rob Traynor (Assistant Secretary).

Observing: Ms Megan Gerrie and Ms Caitlin Harvey

Apologies: Professor Ann Griffin; Ms Darcy Lan; Professor Abel Nyampfene; Professor Mike Rowson; Professor Nicola Walshe. and Professor Stan Zochowski

Part I: Preliminary Business

1. **Welcome, Apologies and Announcements**

1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the new academic year and a new session of Education Committee. She extended specific welcomes to Dr Paul Greening, new Director of Education and Student Experience for the Faculty of Brain Sciences, and Professor Ulrich Tiedau, newly elected representative to EdCom from Academic Board.

2. **Terms of Reference and Membership**

2.1. Approved – the Terms of Reference and Membership of Education Committee for 2024-25 at EDCOM 1-01 (24-25).

3. Minutes of the last meeting

3.1. Approved – the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 July 2024 [EdCom Minutes 96-110, 2023-24] at EDCOM 1-02 (24-25).

4. Matters Arising

4.1. Noted – that further to Item 100 of the 2023-24 session, the Faculty of Laws had decided to partake in the Delayed Assessment Scheme, meaning that all faculties were now included. The scheme's effectiveness would be reviewed following the 2024-25 academic session.

4.2. Noted – that further to item 102 of the 2023-24 session, the Office for Students had published its next round of analysis of the proportion of first class awards and within that, the proportion of unexplained firsts. UCL's position, while still high, was much improved based on the previous few years. The Chair noted that this may be result of the impacts of UCL's approach to mitigation during Covid finally working its way through. Further analysis would be presented to Quality and Standards Committee and Education Committee later in the term.

4.3. Noted – that further to item 103 of the 2023-24 session, the proposal to review the involvement of external scrutineers in the programme suspension and withdrawal process would be discussed by the Quality and Standards Committee at its first meeting in October.

4.4. The Chair updated members on the recent cyber attack affecting Birkbeck College, University of London. This had affected the technology in teaching spaces used by UCL, and communications were due to be circulated on the measures being put in place to mitigate these impacts.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

5. National Student Survey 2024: Outcomes and Actions

5.1. Received - the paper at EDCOM 1-03 (24-25), introduced by the Chair and presented by Professor Parama Chaudhury, Pro-Vice Provost Student Academic Experience. The paper outlined UCL's performance in the recent National Student Survey, how that broke out across subject areas, and benchmarked against the sector. It also outlined how this positioned UCL for the next iteration of the Teaching Excellence Framework.

5.2. The paper asked EdCom to consider the implications of the report and to approve actions in response. During discussion, the following points were noted:

a) That while there had been some improvements in UCL's position on Assessment and Feedback, and in some of our larger departments, we remain below our TEF benchmark group in all student experience metrics bar Learning Resources. We are in the Bronze zone for Assessment and Feedback and Organisation and Management.

b) That poor performance in student experience outcomes is impacting on our national league table position, with a drop from 8th to 9th in the Guardian league table, and from 6th to 7th in the Times.

c) That the factors for our underperformance are multiple, and varied between departments, and that space needed to be created to enable those departments facing challenges to learn from those departments performing well in those same areas.

d) That it was important to ensure that existing governance and quality assurance mechanisms were enabling us to achieve improvement, and not simply creating additional work without evidence of value.

5.3. EdCom agreed that this challenge was of significant importance, given its impact on the experience of our students, and our resulting institutional standing. They approved the proposed actions, and the additional proposal to arrange a session for EdCom to learn from the good practice in high performing departments.

6. Programme Excellence Project 2024-25

6.1. Received – three papers from the Programme Excellence Project, presented by Professor Kathryn Woods, Pro-Vice Provost Student Engagement and Project Lead:

a) At EDCOM 1-04 (24-25), a paper for EdCom to note, titled *The Year of the Programme* outlining the reasons behind and the vision for the curriculum review that will be undertaken in 2024-25.

b) At EDCOM 1-05 (24-25), a paper for EdCom to consider and provide feedback on, titled *UCL Curriculum Landscape Study* presenting a detailed analysis of the underlying complexity of UCL's current curriculum offer from an institutional vantage, as well as an analysis and internal commentary on our current methods for managing this curriculum and its quality.

c) At EDCOM 1-06 (24-25), a paper for EdCom to approve, titled *Curriculum Definitions and Data Model*, which recommended adjustments to the definitions of various curriculum framework components in response to requests for clarity emerging from the portfolio review and early consultation with stakeholders on the curriculum review.

6.2. EdCom noted that the curriculum review was envisaged as a framework facilitating local conversations about curriculum decisions. The purpose of the papers was to help set the scene for these conversations, and to aid programme teams in undertaking their local reviews.

6.3. EdCom endorsed the two papers presented for comment and extended specific thanks to the authors of paper EDCOM 1-05 (24-25), which was praised for its utility and the way it presented the interfaculty differences in curriculum set up and operation. It was noted that the paper had been further updated following submission to EdCom to include assessment data for 2024-25.

6.4. Through discussion, it was noted that the paper on the curriculum landscape should emphasise the role of the programme in building communities of students, and to acknowledge that while optionality created more complex curricula, it also provided a more enriching experience, where the choice delivered matched the expectations that were set. .

6.5. Approved – the paper EDCOM 1-06 (24-25), with the condition that the 30 credit limit rule be removed from the definition of elective modules. The principle of a limit, and what it should be, would be discussed through the consultation on curriculum excellence principles.

7. Office for Students Reportable Event – Ear Institute

7.1. Received – at EDCOM 1-07 (24-25) a report informing Education Committee of an event, reported to the Officer for Students, related to a failure to properly secure accreditation for the BSc Audiology programme in the Faculty of Brain Sciences, presented by Ashley Doolan, Head of Academic Policy, Quality and Standards.

7.2. It was noted that while mitigating actions were now in place for the affected cohorts, thanks in no small part to the efforts of the colleagues in the faculty and department, the event had highlighted serious gaps in UCL's oversight of the management of accredited programmes. It was noted that proposals to address this would come up under a later item, but that EdCom could take some specific actions now.

7.3. Approved – the recommendation to ask the Quality and Standards Committee to identify and implement enhancements to policy and procedure that will clarify the responsibility for:

a) Meeting the programme level requirements of an accrediting Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body.

b) Ensuring that programmes approved by Education Committee are delivered as approved.

8. Proposal – Partnership to Deliver Programmes in Aviation Management

8.1. Received – at EDCOM 1-08 (24-25) a proposal to apply for a tender to deliver an undergraduate programme in aviation management in partnership with the Emirates Flight Training Academy, presented by Professor Alan Parkinson, Deputy Director (Education) for the UCL School of Management.

8.2. The Chair noted that this proposal was being submitted so the programme team could benefit from EdCom's feedback and understand what would be required to provide assurance of the quality of the education and student experience. This was deemed necessary due to the precedent setting structure of the partnership and the programme, which would be delivered in partnership with an organisation without its own Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs), would deliver most of the programme teaching in an overseas setting, and would lead to a UCL award.

8.3. In discussion of the proposal, the following points were raised:

a) That the Faculty of Engineering Sciences (the home faculty) were broadly supportive of the proposal but were keen to ensure that effective due diligence was done on the programme on the grounds of ethics and in-country risk assessment. It was clarified that this was part of the normal partnership proposal process.

b) That work would need to be done to secure assurance about the considerations of equality, diversity and inclusion in the admissions criteria and process, particularly given the jurisdictional differences in the approach to equalities legislation.

c) That there were real concerns about the lack of in-house expertise in aviation, and particularly pilot training. This presented risks in terms of the ability to robustly quality assure the programme, but also should the need arise to take teaching back in-house, for example should there be a contractual dispute or early termination.

d) There were some concerns raised about the proportion of teaching being delivered by EFTA, an organisation without DAPs, particularly at the higher levels. It was acknowledged that, while not a degree awarding body, EFTA, as a provider of the Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) was subject to regulation by the Civil Aviation Authority and International Civil Aviation Organisation.

[*Secretary's Note: Iain Hanson, Honorary Professor in the Bartlett School of Sustainable Construction and Flight Training Captain, EFTA, joined the meeting at this point in discussion.*]

8.4. EdCom members were thanked for their feedback, and for their concern that the partnership does not lead UCL into a position of reputational risk or a risk to fulfil its obligations to its regulators, such as the Office for Students. Assurance was provided that programmes are delivered on this model at other English HEIs, including the University of West London and the University of Birmingham, and have satisfied the requirements of the OfS.

8.5. Concluded – that the proposal could not be endorsed at this time due to outstanding concerns with how the programme will be effectively quality assured and managed by UCL, given the proportion of the programme due to be delivered by EFTA to the curriculum for the ATPL. The proposal should be resubmitted to EdCom following a review of the OfS conditions related to franchised provision, and assurance that risks associated with this were understood and appropriately mitigated.

9. Proposal – Programme Amendment and Review Committee

9.1. Received – at EDCOM 1-09 (24-25), a proposal to constitute a new subcommittee of Quality and Standards Committee to oversee the policy and procedure related to the amendment and review of taught programmes, presented by Ashley Doolan, Head of Academic Policy, Quality and Standards.

9.2. EdCom noted that the proposal for constitute a new committee had two key motivating factors:

a) To elevate the level of attention and scrutiny paid to amendments of existing taught programmes – which had historically been delegated to a working group by an overstretched PMAP.

b) To provide a formal governance body to oversee the operation of the curriculum review process proposed as part of the Programme Excellence Project.

9.3. Resolved - to endorse the proposal to constitute a Programme Amendment and Review Committee.

9.4. Additionally, EdCom was asked to consider a pause on programme amendment activity during the 2024-25 academic year to enable reallocation of effort and focus on the curriculum review. If agreed, no programme amendment proposal would be permitted via the previously approved process unless a case could be made for its

necessity, based on specific criteria and endorsed by the Chairs of Departmental and Faculty Education Committees.

9.5. Resolved – to endorse the proposal to pause programme amendment activity during the 2024-25 academic year.

10. Proposal – Collaborative and Accredited Provision Committee

10.1. Approved – at EDCOM 1-10 (24-25), a proposal to constitute a new subcommittee of Quality and Standards Committee to oversee the policy and procedure related to programmes delivered in partnership with another organisation, and programmes accredited by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body, presented by Ashley Doolan, Head of Academic Policy Quality and Standards.

10.2. Endorsed – the proposal to conduct an audit of currently accredited programmes.

11. Internal Quality Review

11.1. Received – a verbal update from the IQR Panel Chair confirming that Internal Quality Review visits would take place in the Division of Psychology and Languages Sciences, the Medical School, and the Institute of Education in 2024-25.

12. Education Policy Scrutiny Panel

12.1. Received and approved a proposal presented by Zak Liddell, Director of Education Services at EDCOM 1-11 (24-25) to broaden the membership of the Education Policy Scrutiny Panel to include a representative from each Faculty.

12.2. Noted – that EPSP nominees should, where possible, be different from the Quality and Standards Committee nominee.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

13. Approval of New Taught Programmes of Study at UCL

13.1. Approved – the new programmes of study recommended to Education Committee by the Programme and Module Approval Panel at EDCOM 1-12 (24-25).

14. Any Other Business

14.1. No other business was raised.

15. Dates of Next Meeting

15.1. Noted – that 2024-25 meeting dates would be circulated prior to the start of session.

Ashley Doolan
September 2024