



**STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS AND FUNDING COMMITTEE**

**10 December 2015**

**MINUTES**

*PRESENT:*

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Ms Wendy Appleby, Mr David Ashton, Mr Ian Bartlett, Dr Caroline Essex, Dr Julie Evans, Mr Kevin King, Ms Bella Malins, Dr Michael Munday, Dr Yvo Pokern, Ms Katy Redfern, Mr Tom Rowson, Dr David Stevens, Mr Mark Sudbury, Ms Olga Thomas, Ms Wahida Samie and Professor Jo Wolff

*In attendance:* Dr Rachel Wilde (for Professor Norbert Pachler) and Mr Rob Traynor (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor David Bogle, Mrs Lori Houlihan, Ms Suguna Nair, Professor Norbert Pachler and Mr Mike Winter

*Key to abbreviations:*

AC	Academic Committee
ARP	Admissions Requirement Panel
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
CSC	China Scholarships Council
DARO	Development and Alumni Relations Office
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IOE	Institute of Education
KIS	Key Information Set
PAMS	Publications and Marketing Services
PGT	Postgraduate Taught
PGR	Postgraduate Research
PSS	Postgraduate Support Scheme
SFO	Student Funding Office
SITS	Systems in Tuition (student records system)
SLASH	School of Arts and Humanities, Laws and Social and Historical Sciences
SLMS	School of Life and Medical Sciences
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOPG	Scholarships Officers Planning Group
SRS	Student and Registry Services
StRAFC	Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee
UCLU	UCL Union
UG	Undergraduate
WP	Widening Participation

## 1 WELCOME

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the new members and student representatives to membership of the StRAFC.

## 2 CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE 2015-16

[PAPER 1-01]

- 2.1 **Received** – the constitution, membership and terms of reference of StRAFC.
- 2.2 The Chair thanked Professor Anthony Finkelstein, Dr Jan Axmacher and Ms Valerie Hogg for their contributions to StRAFC. They had been replaced by:
- Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker
  - Dr Russell Hitchings
  - Mr Tom Rowson
- 2.3 It was noted that there was still a vacancy for a Faculty Dean representative from the SLMS group of faculties.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 2.4 That the Chair and Secretary contact the SLMS Faculty Deans regarding their representation on StRAFC.

**Action: Professor Anthony Smith and Rob Traynor**

## 3 MINUTES OF 8 JUNE 2015 MEETING

- 3.1 **Approved** – the Minutes of the StRAFC meeting held on 8 June 2015 [StRAFC Minutes 10-18, 2014-15].

## 4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

### 4A Student Recruitment Marketing at UCL: Context, Challenges and Future (StRAFC Minute 16, 08.06.15)

- 4A.1 **Received** – an update from the Head of the International Office and the Head of Publications and Marketing Services.
- 4A.2 The Head of the International Office and the Head of PAMS reported that work was continuing on student recruitment marketing as outlined in the previous meeting. This included enhanced communications with faculties and departments on market research for their programmes and development of the UCL prospectus pages.

## 5 StRAFC THEMES FOR 2015-16

- 5.1 **Received** – an oral introduction from the Chair.
- 5.2 StRAFC had agreed last session to look at matters thematically at each meeting. It was noted that StRAFC's role in defining, monitoring and reviewing

UCL's recruitment strategy, policies and procedures was key and that the Director of Access and Admissions' report on admissions data was particularly important and should continue as a standing agenda item. Although the first meeting will consider scholarships and student funding strategy, it is important that this too is regularly reported and discussed by StRAFC. Recruitment and marketing will be returned to as a topic for consideration at the next meeting.

## 6 SCHOLARSHIPS UPDATE AND STRATEGY

[PAPER 1-02]

6.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the paper from the Head of the Student Funding Office, who reported:

- The paper focused on those award schemes which are managed centrally by the SFO (providing some 6300 individual student awards this session).
- Applications for funding had increased by 39% since 2014-15, largely due to PGT applications to the Postgraduate Support Scheme, reflecting a growing demand from that student group for institutional support. Not all the PSS awards could be allocated due to strict HEFCE criteria on eligibility, though they had agreed that the remaining awards could be made available to the January 2016 PGT intake. There had also been a significant increase in the British Chevening awards, with the Department of Political Science and the Development Planning Unit particularly successful in attracting PGT scholars.
- The SFO also monitored gender and nationalities of the award recipients. This showed a continuing trend of higher numbers of awards to female students across all three levels of study, mirroring national trends.
- Analysis of nationalities showed that Mexican awardees had increased by 46% over the last few years, with Chilean and Colombian numbers also growing. The growth in China Scholarships Council awardees since UCL signed an agreement in 2012, had stalled last session, due to a reduction in candidates selected by the CSC. This was being closely monitored as it may impact on a key UCL recruitment market. Many of the schemes are fee partnerships with overseas funding bodies, for which UCL provided sponsorship for fees, rather than providing funds directly to students.
- The SFO manages a core budget of £4.75 million (2015-16), with £4.48 million committed to awards. The remaining funds will be directed to needs-based schemes for current students. A further £8.6 million of awards have been allocated to the UCL UG Bursary Scheme. As the UK/EU student numbers have increased, the proportion receiving a bursary has declined, indicating that UCL is recruiting more students with higher household incomes. The SFO is also managing a range of mainly UG awards with funding secured by DARO (approximately £490K), additional philanthropic support has also been secured for the PSS scheme.

6.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- The SLASH Finance Director had recently submitted to the SMT a one-off report on current faculty provision for scholarships and fee

partnerships. These funds are not managed centrally by the SFO, but surpass in total the money administered centrally. It was suggested that it would be helpful to conduct this report annually and feed it into StRAFC discussions. It is important that there is greater clarity in how faculties are funding awards to enable greater strategic alignment with the centrally funded awards and for transparency of the information given to students.

- Fee partnerships with overseas bodies such as the CSC were important, although they required some UCL investment to reduce fees, in providing UCL with high quality students and in promoting UCL. They had a knock on positive effect on recruitment from the countries targeted. There is some concern regarding the current reliance on the Chinese market for overall overseas student recruitment. It is thus important to identify and develop markets and partnerships elsewhere to spread the risk should unforeseen factors adversely affect recruitment from China.
- The UCL 2034 strategy specifies that UCL should identify and fund home and EU students from low income backgrounds. To support this aim and meet our WP targets we may need to consider offering more generous schemes. Other HEIs are spending more of their additional fee income on student bursaries e.g. LSE, Manchester and Oxford. It was noted that the Access Agreement Steering Group is modeling different scenarios to consider how UCL allocates available funding.
- The UCL scholarships and student funding strategy is due to be reviewed, and brought in line with UCL 2034 and the new Education and Global Engagement strategies. The scholarships' strategy main aims and principles should be re-considered in the light of these over-arching strategies. It was noted that the SOPG will conduct this work and present draft recommendations for StRAFC to consider.

**RESOLVED:**

- 6.3 That the SOPG reviews the Student Scholarships and Funding Strategy and reports back to StRAFC with recommendations to bring it in line with UCL 2034 and other key over-arching strategies.

**Action: SOPG Members**

**7 POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT DEPOSITS TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE AND NOTES OF 6 OCTOBER 2015 MEETING**

*[PAPER 1-03]*

- 7.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the paper from the Registrar who reported:
- The Group had met in May and October 2015 and had made much progress, with the basis for agreement now achieved. It is now focusing on the follow-up questions asked by AC, following its decision to approve the Group's key recommendations in principle. AC had also delegated to StRAFC oversight of implementing the deposits. The Group will conduct this work and bring recommendations to StRAFC for final approval.
  - Access and Admissions (SRS) are identifying the necessary functionality required for deposits for the SITS student records system. However, with

a number of key UCL developments also underway, it is not yet clear if the necessary resources will be available to proceed. It was expected that a decision on the SITS budget will be taken by its project board in January 2016.

- Access and Admissions had contacted departmental admissions leads to assess the appetite for deposits and their preference for either a £2k or £4K set rate, but received a lower response than anticipated, though most favoured the former rate.
- Assuming that development of the SITS functionality is given the go-ahead, StRAFC will be asked to approve the drafting of a policy document for deposits on acceptances of offers of admission.

7.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- It was suggested that Heads of Department may not have been aware of the deposits, as it was the admissions leads who had been informed. Should the deposits SITS functionality proceed, Access and Admissions will contact them for their views.
- The original intention to introduce the deposits for the 2016-17 session was looking more problematic. In addition to the development of the SITS functionality required, the participating programmes were yet to be confirmed and the UCL policy and the necessary information for the UCL prospectus still to be drafted. The latter actions would also require consideration of any legal implications, a possible equalities impact assessment, as well as taking into account the new tighter rules of the Competitions and Markets Authority.
- Although it is still feasible to undertake all the necessary action to introduce deposits in time for next session, albeit to a tight timescale, many members felt that it would be better to aim to introduce the deposits for 2017-18. A decision would be required once the outcome of the SITS functionality development for deposits was known.

**RESOLVED:**

7.3 That StRAFC give further consideration to the timescale for introducing the deposits on acceptances of offers of admission deposits once the outcome of the SITS functionality development is known in January 2016.

**Action: StRAFC members to note**

## **8 ADMISSIONS UPDATE** *[PAPER 1-04<sup>1</sup>]*

8.1 **Received** – an update on the current admissions cycle by the Director of Access and Admissions, who reported:

- UG applications had increased by 5.3% since 2014, in line with the UCL strategy to increase their numbers. However, due to a highly competitive UG market, most faculties have not been able to meet their conversion

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Amended figures for affiliate student numbers in Table 6 were submitted at the meeting. The data now included faculty target figures, as requested at the last meeting of StRAFC.

targets and need to consider “near miss” applicants (13% of the intake did not meet their original conditions on the offer), thus affecting the overall quality of the students, which has declined over the last two years. The higher UG numbers also made it more difficult to reach WP target figures.

- PGT applications declined marginally on 2014, with UK applications down on 2014, though Overseas applications were buoyant. Over 600 students deferred their offers to 2016-17, perhaps waiting for the PGT student loans to come on-line next session (similar scenarios were reported by other Russell Group HEIs). However some 300 new PGT starters are expected in January which should improve the figures.
- Although overall PGR numbers were static and Overseas numbers high, there are concerns around an 11% drop in acceptances by UK students, a market which is highly dependent on factors such as funding.
- Overall, Overseas numbers remain high, but there is some decline in UK and EU students and UCL is falling short of its estimates for 2015-16. However, a large number of IOE and affiliate students are expected to register in January. The total number of UCL students, following the merger with the IOE has risen to over 38K (30K in 2014-15).

8.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- The SMT had recently considered student number planning and it was not expected that there would be a change, with a target just over 40K in total. It was anticipated that UG numbers would lessen in time and that UCL will recruit more PGT and PGR students. It was suggested that student satisfaction data suggested that UG numbers were at the limits of sustainability without an increase in space and resources.
- It was also suggested that deposits on offers of admissions and/or deferrals could help to manage the numbers actually registering, though experience elsewhere (such as at Queen Mary) indicated that this was not a “magic bullet”. Faculties may need to think about additional activities such as telephone campaigns to contact applicants with offers, to help predict the numbers who will come.

## 9 OPEN DAYS 2015 REPORT (3 AND 4 JULY AND 12 SEPTEMBER)

[PAPER 1-05]

9.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the paper from the Head of Access who reported:

- This was the first time that UCL held more than one Open Day and two of them were also held on Saturdays. All departments with UG programmes were represented at the events, many offering sessions for the prospective students. An encouraging response was received, with 46% of attendees from non-selective state schools.
- Numbers were unfortunately limited due to the non-availability of larger lecture theatres and a ticketing system had to be used for the more popular talks. Nonetheless positive feedback was received from participants and the Saturday events were attended by more parents

than usual. The September Saturday event was particularly popular with state school students, with more attending than at the July events.

- Access and Admissions are reviewing the feedback received from students and staff and are planning on making improvements to this years' events. For instance, it is likely that more attendees will be invited to the Saturday events as the campus is much quieter at weekends.

## 10 STUDENT RECRUITMENT: *WHICH* AUDIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS' WEBSITE INFORMATION

[PAPER 1-06]

10.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the paper from the Head of Publications and Marketing Services who reported:

- *Which?* Magazine had published a report in October 2015 on HEI website information for UG programmes. Although the report did not include UCL, it focused on information which HEIs should include on their websites according to Consumer Protection Regulations, as advised by the CMA. A “traffic light” system was used to show how well the HEIs met the regulations.
- PAMS staff used the criteria tested to assess the UCL website and found that though UCL's information was mostly clear and compliant, there were four areas where it was at most risk (i.e. red in the *Which?* System):
  - Teaching qualifications of staff delivering course
  - Expected workload (i.e. number of hours of study)
  - Fees information for relevant entry year
  - Details of additional costs (e.g. field trips, materials etc.)
- Some of this information is difficult to provide and in the case of fee information, would require substantial changes to UCL's processes and time scales for decision making, such as fee setting.
- Although the statuses applied to the various information categories are currently advisory and do not have any legal standing, there is a risk that they could be tested in law on an HEI at some point and it is not clear how the law would be interpreted.

10.2 The following points were noted in the discussion:

- UCL's CMA Student as Consumer Task Group is meeting next week and will discuss the implications raised by the *Which?* Report, as part of its work on ensuring that UCL is compliant with the CMA Consumer Protection Regulations. It will invite UCLU to nominate a representative to provide a student perspective.
- Much of the programme and module data is currently held in different systems, which makes it difficult to access. The strategy to improve module information through academic review and the Portico three year plan (currently being considered in the planning round) may help address this, but it would be important to bear in mind CMA compliance and the need for information transparency and access.

- Some of the information, but not all, is presented in the Key Information Set data on the prospectus pages (e.g. the KIS shows teaching contact hours but doesn't show expected workload).
- Fee information may be the most difficult to address. This appears to be an issue of timing rather than the actual information presented as it is not updated by UCL until May or June, whereas the *Which?* Audit is conducted in March. Earlier setting of the fees would require significant changes to UCL processes. However, it was suggested that the CMA regulations could provide a good opportunity to discuss fee setting and the faculty planning round might be used to do this earlier.

**RESOLVED:**

- 10.3 That the Head of PAMS keeps StRAFC informed of relevant developments and any progress arising from the *Which?* Report, the CMA Consumer Protection Regulations and from the CMA Student as Consumer Task Group.

**Action: Ian Bartlett to note**

**11 ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENT PANEL ANNUAL REPORT**

[PAPER 1-07]

- 11.1 **Received** – the ARP annual report for 2014-15.

**12 REPORTS OF SUB-GROUPS, WORKING GROUPS ETC OF STRAFC**

- 12.1 **Received** – StRAFC officers received on behalf of the Committee the minutes of the following:

- ARP – 22 June 2015 and 12 October 2015<sup>2</sup>

**13 DRAFT STRAFC ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15 TO ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**

[PAPER 1-08]

- 13.1 **Received** – an oral introduction to the paper from the Secretary, who briefly outlined the key activities undertaken by StRAFC last session.

**RESOLVED**

- 13.2 That the StRAFC Annual Report 2014-15 be approved and submitted to AC.

**ACTION: Rob Traynor**

**14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS – PGR OPEN DAY**

- 14.1 It was noted that the numbers attending the recent PGR Open Day had been lower than expected and that PAMS officers were undertaking a review.

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<sup>2</sup> The minutes are available, along with the other StRAFC papers, on the [StRAFC SharePoint](#).



**RESOLVED:**

- 14.2 That the Head of PAMS prepare a short note on the PGR Open Day for consideration at the next meeting.

**ACTION: Ian Bartlett**

**15 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- 15.1 Dates of further StRAFC meetings in the 2015-16 session are:

15 March 2016 (2pm Haldane Room)  
26 May 2016 (2pm Haldane Room)

Rob Traynor  
StRAFC Secretary

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