

Academic Board
Friday 10 December 2021¹
MINUTES

Present: Dr Michael Spence, President and Provost (Chair).

Professor Ibrahim Abubakar, Professor Nick Achilleos, Professor Patti Adank, Mr James Agar, Professor Joerg Albert, Mr Adnan Ali, Dr Mark Altaweel, Professor Lynn Ang, Professor Timothy Arnett, Professor Jan Axmacher, Professor Torsten Baldeweg, Professor Simon Banks, Professor Yolande Barnes, Professor Gill Bates, Professor Jonathan Bell, Professor Costante Bellettini, Mr Ayman Benmati, Professor Michael Berkowitz, Professor Robert Biel, Professor Stephanie Bird, Dr Matthew Blain, Professor Brad Blitz, Professor Noemie Bouhana, Professor Rachel Bowlby, Professor Annie Britton, Professor Geraldine Brodie, Professor Clare Brooks, Dr Nicole Brown, Professor Dan Browne, Professor Stella Bruzzi, Dr Suzy Buckley, Professor Vishwanie Budhram-Mahadeo, Professor Jonathan Butterworth, Mr Tadhg Caffrey, Dr Jelena Calic, Professor Mario Campanelli, Professor Ben Campkin, Professor Nauro Campos, Professor Licia Capra, Professor Claire Carmalt, Professor Tak Wing Chan, Professor Joanna Chataway, Professor Julian Childs, Professor Kwang Choy, Dr Evangelia Chrysikou, Professor Chris Clack, Professor Lucie Clapp, Professor Beverley Clark, Dr Alun Coker, Professor Susan Collins, Professor Stephen Colvin, Professor Anna Cox, Professor Ben Cox, Ms Sonja Curtis, Professor Izzat Darwazeh, Professor Sally Day, Professor Rohan de Silva, Professor Lorraine Dearden, Professor Marc Deisenroth, Professor Andreas Demosthenous, Professor Janice Derry, Professor Vanessa Diaz, Professor Alison Diduck, Professor Mathias Disney, Professor Annette Dolphin, Ms Dominique Drai, Professor Paulo Drinot, Professor Ian Eames, Professor Frances Edwards, Professor Piet Eeckhout, Ms Brittany Eldridge, Dr Russell Evans, Professor Susan Evans, Ms Pascale Fanning-Tichborne, Ms Ava Fatah, Professor Delmiro Fernandez-Reyes, Dr Liory Fern-Pollak

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Seddon, Professor David Selwood, Professor Almudena Sevilla, Professor Sonu Shamdasani, Professor David Shanks, , Professor Nicola Shelton, Professor David Shipworth, Dr Michael Short, Ms Maria Sibiryakova, Professor Nadia Sidorova, Mr Justin Siefker, Professor Bill Sillar, Professor Trevor Smart, Professor Sam Smidt, Professor Anthony Smith, Mr Andy Smith, Professor Alan Sokal, Professor Pam Sonnenberg, Professor Eva Sorensen, Professor Catalina Spataru, Professor Aimee Spector, Professor Paul Standish, Professor Hugh Starkey, Professor Terence Stephenson, Professor Andrew Steptoe, Professor Claudio Stern, Professor Sacha Stern, Dr Rhiannon Stevens, Professor Michael Stewart, Professor Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, Professor Judith Suissa, Professor Alice Sullivan, Professor Oriel Sullivan, Dr Mike Sulu, Professor Adam Swift, Ms Stephanie Sze, Mr Bryan Taylor, Professor Irving Taylor, Professor Giles

16 MATTERS ARISING

16.1

approach; whether membership of the programme or submission to the equality index impacted the University's ability to uphold academic freedom or freedom of expression; and whether UCL should subscribe to programmes and submit to an evaluation scheme that are politically and ideologically contested.

- 17.4 Stonewall was widely-respected for its contribution to the transformation of UK law and policy in relation to same-sex sexuality since its foundation in 1989. In 2015 Stonewall extended its remit to work on trans rights. Elements of its approach since that time had been controversial, particularly in respect of perceived tensions between trans rights and women's rights-based rights. In recent months a number of public bodies had withdrawn from the Diversity Champions Programme.
- 17.5 Two groups of members had written to the Board and these letters had been circulated with the paper. A member of each group was invited to speak to their position.
- 17.6 Those who wrote in opposition to renewal of membership noted that Stonewall demanded a hardline stance on its position on gender identity, vilifying those who took an opposing view on matters of gender self-identification and the legal implications of this for the right to single-sex spaces. In the view of the authors, this had serious implications for academic freedom. Opposition to data collection on the basis of sex, and to discussion of this position, was specifically cited. It was noted that the Reindorf Review into two incidents of no-platforming at the University of Essex had concluded that Stonewall had misrepresented the Equality Act 2010, contributing to a climate promoting potentially unlawful actions by the university including a failure to uphold the Public Sector Equality Duty. Further, members of UCL had been no-platformed for taking positions contrary to those of Stonewall. An attempt had been made to cancel a 2020 event on grounds that it had been in violation of the University's policies. It was argued that a similar approach by Stonewall would effectively outsource the responsibility for the subject of ongoing academic debate.
- 17.7 Those who had written in favour of renewal noted the University's history and culture of inclusion and equality, and the need to have access to the tools available through the Stonewall schemes in order to protect and advance the equalities of LGBTQ+ people. Stonewall was a voluntary organisation and advisory, and so did not prohibit any institution from hosting gender-critical speakers; freedom of speech was protected by the Human Rights Act 1998 and the University's codes of conduct. It was for institutions to decide how and whether to reflect Stonewall guidance in their culture and practice. Much of the criticism of Stonewall in the current debate was not in fact of Stonewall itself, but of individuals acting on their own behalf.
- 17.8 Members were invited to speak to the issue, alternating between speakers on either side of the debate.

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17.10 Points made by members speaking in support of rejoining the schemes included the following:

Stonewall provided access to the best advice and the ability to benchmark against other employers, against which UCL could then decide whether to change policy and practice. Members cited a number of advances at UCL in recent years which had been made under the auspices of Stonewall schemes or in response to Stonewall training. Experience suggested that such schemes, whatever their flaws, were crucial drivers for positive and progressive change. If re-engagement with Stonewall was the most effective way of pursuing the legal duty to eliminate discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, then that is what should be done.

Stonewall provided advice; there was no compulsion on a university to agree with or to follow it. Any attempt to no-platform individuals on the basis of Stonewall guidance represented a misunderstanding of that advice.

If there was evidence of academic freedom being harmed by rejoining either programme or the workplace index, then UCL would need to decide how to address that as a separate issue, as well as providing support to the members of staff affected.

lapsed in 2020 on a temporary

