



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, Professor Nigel Field, Professor Margot Finn, Professor Elizabeth Fisher, Professor Maria Fitzgerald, Mr James Ford, Professor Edward Fottrell, Professor Nicholas Freemantle, Dr Bettina Friedrich, Dr David Frost, Dr Martin Fry, Professor Alison Fuller, Professor Tatiana Fumasoli, Professor Jonathan Gale, Professor Sarah Garfinkel, Dr Claire Garnett, Professor Haidy Geismar, Professor Dame Hazel Genn, Professor Carsten Gerner-Beuerle, Professor Alasdair Gibb, Professor Adam Gibson, Professor Deborah Gill, Professor Xavier Golay, Ms Milena Gonakova, Professor Nikolaos Gonis, Dr Hugh Goodacre, Professor David Gough, Professor Lesley Gourlay, Ms Emma Grant, Professor John Gray, Professor Francis Green, Ms Amanda Greene, Professor Linda Greensmith, Professor Alistair Greig, Professor Lee Grieveson, Professor Michael Grubb, Dr

¹ This meeting was held via videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

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Anne Grydehoj, Professor Francois Guesnet, Professor David Guile, Dr Lucia Patrizio Gunning, Professor Stephen Hailes, Professor Antonia Hamilton, Professor Kirstine Hansen, Mr Jesper Hansen, Professor Kenneth Harris, Professor Adham Hashibon, Professor Sarah Hawkes, Professor Jenny Head, Professor Michael Heinrich, Professor Ian Hepburn, Dr Ulrike Heuer, Professor Evangelos Himonides, Professor Michael Hoare, Dr Christine Hoffmann, Professor Arne Hofmann, Professor Catherine Holloway, Professor Jonathan Holmes, Professor Andrew Hudson-Smith, Professor Alun Hughes, Dr Quentin Huys-Gavric, Professor John Hyman, Professor Richard Jackman, Professor Kathryn Jeffery, Professor Richard Jenner, Professor Carey Jewitt, Professor Philip Jones, Professor Anthony Julius, Ms Charlotte Choy, Dr Thomas Kador, Professor Maria Kamargianni, Dr Jens Kandt, Professor Tara Keck, Professor Catherine Keen, Mr Joshua Kerr, Professor Nicoletta Kessar, Dr Maki Kimura, Professor John King, Professor James Kirkbride, Professor Hannah Knox, Professor Diane Koenker, Professor Nikolaos Konstantinidis, Dr Efrosyni Konstantinou, Professor Alison Koslowski, Ms Edyta Kostanek, Professor Patty Kostkova, Dr Danielle Lamb, Professor Claudia Lapping, Professor Tim Levine, Professor Li Wei, Mr Mutong Li, Professor Xi Liang, Professor Christoph Lindner, Professor Claire Lindsay, Professor Allison Littlejohn, Professor Alison Lloyd, Professor Annemaree Lloyd-Zantiotis, Professor David Lomas, Dr Helga Lúthersdóttir, Ms Collette Lux, Professor Ruth Mace, Professor Anson Mackay, Dr Isabel Mackay, Professor Mairead MacSweeney, Professor Claudio De Magalhaes, Ms Blathnaid Mahony, Professor Eleanor Main, Ms Viktória Makai, Dr Giulio Marini, Professor Chloe Marshall, Professor Deborah Martin, Professor John Martin, Dr Juliana Martins, Professor Sarah Matthews, Dr Margaret Mayston, Professor Ronan McCrea, Professor Carolyn McGettigan, Dr Ruth McGinity, Professor Anne McMunn, Dr Saladin Meckled-Garcia, Ms Angharad Milenkovic, Professor Robert Mills, Professor Grant Mills, Professor John Mitchell, Professor Richard Mole, Professor Sara Mole, Professor Tania Monteiro, Dr Dafne Zuleima Morgado Ramirez, Professor Ruth Morgan, Professor Gemma Moss, Professor Vivek Mudera, Professor John Mullan, Professor Mirco Musolesi, Professor Florian Mussgnug, Ms Marga Navarrete, Dr Helene Neveu Kringelbach, Dr Mark Newman, Dr Will Newton, Professor Thanh Nguyen, Professor Lorraine Noble, Dr Alex Norori-McCormac, Dr Abel Nyamapfene, Professor Margaret O'Brien, Dr Ademola Odunsi, Professor Moses Oketch, Professor Alexandra Olaya-Castro, Professor Sandy Oliver, Professor Martin Oliver, Professor John O'Regan, Mr Derfel Owen, Professor Norbert Pachler, Professor Enrico Palandri, Professor Amos Paran, Professor Ivan Parkin, Professor Nora Pashayan, Professor Sandip Patel, Dr Thomas Peach, Professor Richard Pearson, Professor Paola Pedarzani, Professor Jane Perryman, Professor Irene Petersen, Professor Ann Phoenix, Professor Hynek Pikhart, Dr Jeffrey Pittaway, Professor Helene Plun-Favreau, Professor Mike Porter, Dr Stephen Potts, Professor Ian Preston, Professor Stephen Price, Dr Joana Ramalho, Professor Margaret Rawes, Professor Geraint Rees, Professor Michael Reiss, Professor Jane Rendell, Professor Antonella Riccio, Professor Mary Richardson, Professor Aeli Roberts, Professor Helen Roberts, Dr Tristan Robinson, Professor Miguel Rodrigues, Professor Sasha Roseneil, Professor Meg Russell, Professor Paul Ruyssevelt, Ms Fiona Ryland, Professor Ruben Saakyan, Professor John Sabapathy, Dr Benet Salway, Professor Prince Saprai, Professor Federica Sarro, Haleema Sarwar, Professor Ralf Schoepfer, Professor Ingrid Schoon, Professor Stephanie Schorge, Professor Jonathan Schott, Professor Anette Schrag, Professor Katrina Scior, Professor Eloise Scotford, Professor Sophie Scott, Professor Toby

Seddon, Professor David Selwood, Professor Almudena Sevilla, Professor Sonu Shamdasani, Professor David Shanks, Dr Ala'a Shehabi, 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 Thomas, Professor Olga Thomas, Professor Alan Thompson, Professor Julian Thompson, Dr Amy Thornton, Professor Ulrich Tiedau, Dr Eleanor Tillett, Dr Matteo Tiratelli, Professor Ahmed Toosy, Mr Martyn Towner, Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson, Ms Helen Tsui, Professor Elaine Unterhalter, Professor Paul Upchurch, Mr Graham Van Goffrier, Professor Liz Varga, Professor Ann Varley, Mr Clive Vassell, Professor Laura Vaughan, Professor Steven Vaughan, Professor Yiannis Ventikos, Ms Marine-Oceane Verdez-Scholler, Professor Carol Vincent, Dr Nalini Vittal, Dr Bella Vivat, Professor David Voas, Professor John Vorhaus, Ms Yasmin Walker, Professor Simon Walker-Samuel, Professor Michael Walls, Professor Nicola Walshe, Dr Ryan Wang, Professor David Waters, Professor Johanna Waters, Professor Jim Watson, Dr Hayley Whitaker, Professor Ian White, Professor Edward Wild, Professor Andrew Wills, Professor Duncan Wilson, Professor Helen Wilson, Professor James Wilson, Professor Stephen Wilson, Professor Tom Woodin, Professor Selina Wray, Professor Maria Wyke, Professor Ian Zachary, Dr Sophie Zadeh, Dr Vedran Zerjav, Professor Stan Zochowski, Professor Martijn Zwijnenburg.

In attendance: Mr Douglas Bertram, Mr Kevin Coutinho, Dr Clare Goudy, Mr Nick McGhee (Secretary to Academic Board), Ms Kirsty Walker, Ms Olivia Whiteley, Ms Teresa Williams.

Apologies: Professor Alice Bradbury, Professor Helene Burningham, Dr Declan Chard, Professor Elaine Chase, Miss Andrey Chau, Professor Elizabeth Fisher, Professor Becky Francis, Professor Dan Jagger, Professor Ofer Lahav, Dr Michaela Pollock, Professor Sarah Price, Dr Suzanne Ruddy, Professor Jolene Skordis, Dr Buğra Süsler.

Part I: Preliminary Formal Business

15 ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES

- 15.1 The minutes of the AB meeting of 3 November 2021 [AB Minutes 1-14, 2021-22] were confirmed, subject to the deletion of footnote 5.

16 MATTERS ARISING

- 16.1 In respect of the arrangements for the return to campus [AB Minute 4, 2021-2022], it was confirmed that details of a decision regarding the use of Sage methodology would be circulated to members of Academic Board.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

17 UCL AND STONEWALL (Paper 2-13)

- 17.1 The Provost noted that neither UCL's commitment to supporting people of diverse genders and sexualities, nor its commitment to academic freedom, were up for debate. In advance of the discussion, he also noted that some staff and students identifying as LGBTQ+ worked in jurisdictions where that was unlawful or culturally very difficult. With a view to the possibility of statements about the current meeting being made on social media, he reminded members that comments at Academic Board are not usually attributed to individuals in the minutes, and that it was important to respect people's ability to control the way in which they shared information about their own identity.
- 17.2 The Pro-Provost (Equity and Inclusion) introduced the paper. UCL had been a member of the Stonewall UK Diversity Champions Programme since 2006, and has submitted to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index regularly since 2009. The Diversity Champions Programme provides employers with a source of advice and support on advancing LGBTQ+ equality in the workplace. In March 2020, in view of the financial circumstances in the early days of the pandemic, the EDI team in consultation with the LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group had decided not to renew UCL's annual subscription to either the Diversity Champions Programme or the Global Diversity Champions Programme. The University Management Committee (UMC) was now due to reconsider UCL's formal relationship with Stonewall, including both whether to re-join the Diversity Champions Programme, and/or the Global Diversity Champions Programme, and whether UCL should submit to the 2023 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, and wished to have a sense of AB's views on this matter.
- 17.3 The paper was not a piece of research and did not rest on a survey of particular groups. The paper instead sought to explain the background, to present the arguments for and against membership of the Diversity Champions Programme and entering the Workplace Equality Index, and to canvass views on the issue. In support of that process it also enumerated a number of more detailed questions to be considered, relating to: the signalling value of rejoining the programmes; the practical support provided by Stonewall; whether UCL needed an external charter mark in respect of its approach to LGTBQ+ equality; whether the differing positions taken by members of UCL to self-identification and the sex/gender distinction prevented UCL from aligning itself with an organisation promoting a particular

approach; whether membership of the programme or submission to the equality index impacted UCL'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 existing sex-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 'no debate' 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. Stonewall's 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 conference on women's rights at UCL on the grounds that it had been in contradiction to Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index. It was argued that a renewal of UCL's relationship with Stonewall would effectively outsource the institution's thinking on a set of complex and contentious issues which were the subject of ongoing academic debate.
- 17.7 Those who had written in favour of renewal cited UCL's distinctive 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's guidance was educative 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 by UCL's own 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.

17.9 Points made by members speaking in opposition to rejoining the schemes included the following:

- Stonewall had an explicit ‘no debate’ stance which did not accept that legitimate differences of opinion existed in the space in which gender self-identification came into conflict with the interests of women. Rather, they framed the debate as one about the right of trans people to exist, and characterised those who opposed their approach as transphobic. Comments made by the current Chief Executive of Stonewall were cited in this respect.
- Stonewall was an important charity working on inclusion, but there were other organisations with different views. Inclusion needed to take account of all protected characteristics, including religion. Fundamentally the issue was one of competing claims of rights when different protected characteristics came into conflict. Stonewall’s approach did not reflect the fact that the terms are contested, including by LGTBQ+ people themselves.
- UCL should function as a forum in which debate takes place and should not submit to assessment on the extent of its compliance with the values of an external body explicitly on one side of the debate. It was antithetical to a commitment to debate and enquiry, and to the concept of ‘disagreeing well’, for UCL to ally itself with a lobby group which took the approach of silencing debate in general, and disproportionately the voices of women in particular. Acknowledging UCL’s history in respect of issues of equality, members suggested that this presented evidence of the importance of the institution taking an independent stance. UCL should seek to draw on the breadth and depth of expertise among its own staff in seeking to formulate its own approach to such issues.
- The fact that the 2020 conference had gone ahead should not be taken as an indication that Stonewall did not present a challenge to free speech. The conference organisers had complied with the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech but this had not been seen as sufficient by those who sought to have the event cancelled. This kind of approach was likely to discourage the organisation of similar events in the future.
- The Reindorff Review had found University of Essex policy, which had been reviewed by Stonewall, to have misrepresented the law and to have instead described the law as Stonewall would have preferred it to be. The report found that the university appeared to have been given the impression that gender-critical academics could legitimately be excluded from the institution. Until Stonewall acknowledged such mistakes and took steps to avoid making them again in the future, UCL ought not to work with them.
- Academic Board had voted in favour of finding an alternative to the IHRA definition of antisemitism because of concerns that the definition’s imperfections would inhibit free speech [AB Minute 25, 2020-21]. Noting the concerns expressed about how a decision not to renew in this case would be perceived, it was suggested that it would be inconsistent to prioritise concerns over the messaging in this case.

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 LGTBQ+ 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.
- UCL’s membership of the schemes had lapsed in 2020 on a temporary basis in view of the unusual conditions at the time. Many members of the university had been unaware that UCL’s membership had not been renewed. The EDI team was now adequately resourced and the LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group had voted to rejoin.
- No viable alternative to rejoining the Stonewall schemes had been identified in the papers or in the current discussion. The provision of a UCL-specific alternative was likely to be very resource-intensive.
- While this discussion was specifically about re-joining Stonewall schemes, the underlying subject was the lives of a marginalised group of people, the extent of whose representation in the current debate was unclear. Rejoining would help UCL to move forward to supporting LGBTQ+ people. A decision not to rejoin risked sending the message internally that UCL was unsupportive of these colleagues, and of creating an external perception that the decision was further evidence of a global reaction against the unfinished social revolution that had brought about the advances in equalities and freedoms in recent decades.

17.11 Members were invited to vote, using Zoom’s anonymous poll feature, on the two principal questions set out in the paper. The view of Academic Board, which would be relayed to UMC, was as follows:

Should UCL re-join the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme and the Stonewall Global Diversity Champions Programme?

Yes	97 votes	31%
No	183 votes	59%
Abstain	28 votes	9%

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Should UCL submit to the 2023 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (in 2022)?

Yes	93 votes	30%
No	175 votes	57%
Abstain	40 votes	13%

17.12 The Provost thanked members for the constructive and collegial way in which the debate had been held.

18 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

18.1 Wednesday 26 January 2022, 14:05-16:00.

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