GOS ICH
STAFF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Meeting to be held on

Monday 9th November 2020 at 12.00noon
Virtual – via Microsoft TEAMS

Minutes

Present: Claudiu Cozmescu – Lead RSR, GGM, Year 2 – Chair
Prof Claire Thorne, Departmental Graduate Tutor (Research) - Co-Chair
Annie Murphy, Research Degrees Administrator – (Minutes)
Stella Fusco, Senior Research Degrees Administrator
Dr Frederique Liegeois, Postgraduate Research Tutor,
Developmental Neurosciences (DN)
Dr Andrew Stoker, Postgraduate Tutor,
Developmental Biology & Cancer (DBC)
Dr Mona Bajaj-Elliott, Postgraduate Research Tutor,
Infection, Immunity, Inflammation (III)
Prof Hannah Mitchison, Postgraduate Research Tutor, Genetics and Genomic
Medicine (GGM)
Raj Rajeev, RTDR, Infection, Immunity, Inflammation (III)
Sophie Bennett, RTDR, Population, Policy and Practice (PPP)
Jeshmi Jeyabalan Srikaran, RTDR, Genetics and Genomic Medicine (GGM)
Liam Ridge, RTDR, Developmental Biology & Cancer (DBC)

Student Representation (RSRs):
Fatimah Almousawi, RSR, GGM, Year 1
Ivan Doykov, RSR, GGM, Year 3
Machaela Palor, RSR, III, Year 1
Renuka Kadirkamanathan, RSR, III, Year 1
Nicole Filipow, RSR, III, Year 2
Alice Burleigh, RSR, III, Year 2
Kerry-Anne Kite, RSR, III, Year 3
Raasib Mahmood, RSR, DBC, Year 2
Remi Looi Somoye, RSR, DBC, Year 3
Georgia Stimpson, RSR, DN, Year 1
Clarissa Sorger, RSR, DN, Year 2/3
Lucy Karwatowska, RSR, PPP, Year 2
Gabriela Toledo, RSR, PPP, Year 2
Emeline Rougeaux RSR, PPP, Year 3

Apologies:
Professor Mary Fewtrell, Postgraduate Research Tutor, PPP
Natasha Schoeler, RTDR, DN
Raasib Mahmood, RSR, DBC, Year 2

1	**Welcome and introductions**
	CC welcomed the committee and summarised the purpose of SSCC meetings noting the Terms of Reference available in the Teams meeting group and on the intranet. Committee members introduced themselves to the meeting.
	SSCC members in attendance:
	o PGR team
	o RSRs including PG Society representation
	- In attendance for Term 1 SSCC
	o Research & Training Department Representatives (RTDRs)
	o Grazia Manzotti - Departmental Equal Opportunity Liaison Officer
	o Philippa Mills – Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) Initiative, Chair
	o Ivan Doykov (EDI, plus RSR)
2	**Minutes of the previous meeting 24th June 2020**
	Minutes agreed and approved.
3	**Matters Arising from the minutes**
	To be addressed via the Agenda
4	**Student Mentor Meetings – Oral reports by Mentors**
	Group mentor meetings and/or coffee meetings had taken place with new students at the beginning of term across all departments and organisation of second meetings are in progress this term. RSRs reported there were no issues raised from these meetings. Coffee mornings had taken the format of larger group meetings, but some individual mentor meetings were also being organised for the discussion of more confidential matters. RSRs reported that the students really enjoyed the coffee mornings to mingle with groups of students virtually as they are beginning to feel isolated.
	AS invited suggestions from the RSRs for making the Moodle course more beneficial for the purposes of mentoring, such as granting RSRs with editing access to enable them to manage coffee morning schedules.
	ACTION: RSRs to feedback any suggestions for Mentoring Moodle course to AS.
5	**Recent developments for attention of research students**
	i) Statistics support (RDC) - Postdocs support
	Postdoc advisors had previously agreed to assist in considering approaches to provide statistics support for individual PhD students requiring extra support. Kathyrn Hesketh is now on maternity leave so there is no further update on this - to be added to the agenda for discussion at next SSCC meeting.
	A SLMS working group is facilitating the development of a basic online statistics training course to be made accessible for all PhD students via CASC. It is anticipated that CASC courses will revert back to a face-to-face format once they are able to do so. However, SLMS funding has been confirmed for the recruitment of a Teaching Fellow to develop the course online, and it is anticipated they will be appointed by the end of the year.

	ii) Monthly stipend payments Stipends are now paid on a monthly basis with effect from 1st October 2020. iii) i-expenses Ed Shaw, ICH Finance Manager, is working with administrators and the Research Degrees Office on a procedural document to streamline the process for staff and students. Research and Teaching Department admin teams will be responsible for arranging new starters to have access to their project consumables budget. If a supervisor is not agreeable to this arrangement, they will need to opt out. Once finalised, the document will be made available to students, supervisors and department admin teams, and it is expected that this will be included in department induction materials for students and staff. **ACTION: RDO to circulate i-expenses procedural document once available.**
6	**RSR feedback on how the role between Thesis Committees (TCs) and Postgraduate (PG) Tutors could be split** CT explained that the pandemic has caused some delays with TC meetings introduced for students registered since September 2019. RSRs reported that overall TCs were useful to help students to stay motivated and keep on top of tasks to be completed. However, the additional workload in student responsibility for organising TC meetings was noted. It was clarified that the TC meeting points provide clear timescales for students to schedule meetings, which can be organised via email or doodle poll. TC guidelines are available on the intranet and a weblink was provided to the committee. It was also noted that PhD timelines are available on the intranet for students to map their progress. It is anticipated that the UCL Doctoral School will request SLMS to provide TC feedback from first year students by the summer term 2021, and so Institutes are likely to be asked to survey students early in the new year. It was reiterated that the feedback collated from annual monitoring process will be particularly important this year due to delays in research caused by the pandemic. This year the process will be completed via Microsoft Forms to help with streamlining the process across Faculty. Students will be expected to complete Form B and either Form C1 or C2 online, to be discussed in a confidential meeting with a postgraduate tutor in relation to progress and any issues (including access to training, supervision concerns etc). It was clarified Form B is confidential and will not be shared with the student's supervisor, but Form C1/C2 is a joint report which should be discussed and agreed with the supervisor before it is submitted by the student. It was noted that TCs are likely to blur the role of the PG Tutor in annual monitoring for students registered since September 2019, but it was reiterated that they are distinct processes that provide students with different forms of support (i.e. pastoral vs academic). It was agreed that RSRs should review the Microsoft Forms to feedback from a student perspective before the annual monitoring process begins. **ACTION: RDO to provide RSRs with link to MS Forms for Annual Monitoring once available for RSRs to provide feedback.**
7	**COVID-19 and PGR**: a) **Feedback on student support (remote supervision; wellbeing; financial – extension etc)**

i) Remote supervision and student wellbeing

It is a minimum requirement for PhD students to meet with their supervisors on a monthly basis, but it is strongly encouraged that shorter supervision meetings should take place more frequently during the remote working period. It was reiterated that there are many resources available for students who need extra support via the Student Support and Wellbeing Team.

Students reported that whilst the beginning of the closure period was difficult for all PhD students, the majority of communication focused on the return of lab-based students who were most affected. The return to ICH for one day per week has enabled office-based students to feel more supported. It was noted that different practices are operating across different departments and it is important that students do not face barriers to return if this is what they require for their needs. Faculty has requested that all new PhD students are contacted by their DGT to ensure that they are settling and supervision is going well. It was noted that second year students may not feel as settled or confident as they might have under normal circumstances given the timing of the first lockdown in their first year of registration, and should be treated alike to current first year students.

Students reported that it can be difficult to keep track of department events taking place across a number of different virtual platforms. RSRs suggested that the information is collated on a single platform where students could access a schedule and links of the various events taking place across the week in each department. It was also suggested that low attendance to student drop-in sessions could be improved if students were contacted on an individual basis to attend.

ii) Financial extension

The UCL Doctoral School are in the process of considering financial support to be made available for 1st and 2nd year students impacted by delays in research caused by the pandemic, but this is an ongoing exercise and there is no further update.

iii) Teaching opportunities with remote teaching in Term 1 2020/21

There are more opportunities available for PhD students to get involved with the move to remote teaching. The ICH handbook provides information on teaching opportunities with weblinks to the opportunities available within the Faculty. PG tutors are also knowledgeable about the teaching taking place on various courses and can help point students in the right direction of suitable modules to attend. It was clarified that the Programme Director is the first point of contact for students regarding payment, but Helen Bedford and Angie Wade (Co-Directors of Education) and Jane Simmonds can also help with queries.

A PGTA Hub developed through Arena and the Change Makers Project, is now available for students to search and sign up for teaching opportunities - https://www.ucl.ac.uk/pg-teaching-opportunities-hub/. Teaching staff can advertise vacancies via the Hub for students or postdocs to sign up or express interest to join a teaching team. It was agreed a local database would be helpful to align PhD students with the various MSc courses and would feed into the statistics hub being developed for those students requiring more specialised support.

Teaching staff would like to be able to select PhD students suitable for their courses. A training session could be organised for research supervision of MSc projects, so that students could act as a secondary supervisor and help with assessment.

	ACTION: CT to discuss with JS about how to approach creating a local database for aligning PhD students to MSc courses for remote teaching. iv) <u>Auditing of online MSc Modules</u> PhD students have reported some issues with Course Directors not allowing attendance to online MSc modules. It was explained that there are concerns that it could be detrimental to MSc students if modules are popular with PhD students. It was reiterated that MSc students will be prioritised as fee-paying students for these modules and it is up to the Module Leads to decide whether they are willing to run an additional live session for PhD students.

8	**Cohort Building - Academic and Social Events:**
	
	    i) <u>Student Feedback on Autumn Induction</u>
	
	New students reported that the Autumn induction was useful. The induction took a new format combining synchronous and asynchronous material, which could be a useful approach to carry forward as new students begin their studies throughout the year. For those that could not attend, slides are available on Moodle under the Workshops and Talks tab. It was clarified that while the Moodle course is available for all PhD students, induction information for new students is clearly categorised into 'Before you arrive' and 'When you arrive' under 'Essential Information'.
	
	Students reported that different induction events carried out over various platforms can be confusing and it would be useful for induction invitations to be sent via calendar invites instead of emails.
	
	ACTION: RDO to invite students to attend future events via calendar invitations.
	
	    ii) <u>Open Day and Poster Competition</u>
	
	The Institute's Virtual Postgraduate Research Poster Exhibition opened on Wednesday 4th November 2020, when CT and CS provided a virtual talk for prospective PGR students. The virtual exhibition will finish on Wednesday 25th November 2020 with the Otto Wolff Annual Open Day Lecture by Russell Viner on his work to address Covid-19 in children and young people. Prospective students were invited to attend the Open Day Lecture, following which the winners of the poster competition will be announced. Students and staff were strongly encouraged to vote on their favourite poster for the 'People's Choice Award'.
	
	    iii) <u>3MT Competition</u>
	
	RSRs for each department will need to help organise internal heats. Further information will be circulated once confirmed.
	
	    iv) <u>Postgraduate Society</u>
	
	Positive feedback was received for the recent Pictionary event, which students enjoyed as an opportunity to meet other students across departments within the Institute. It was agreed that RSRs could link up with student representatives across the Faculty to increase numbers for remote events going forwards.
	It was confirmed that MK wishes to step down as President of the PG Society and another student will need to be appointed for the role. Any students who are interested in the role or who wish to be involved with the society should contact MK.

	A call for volunteers was circulated for students to help organise social events. GGM will take this forward this term as only one student expressed interest and another call for volunteers will be circulated next term.

It was suggested that the PG Society could advertise Kanopy - https://ucl.kanopy.com/ - a film database which is free for UCL students and staff.

<div align="center">v)   <u>Skill Exchange Programme – RSR update</u></div>

RSRs agreed that each session should comprise of five short presentations (10 minutes each) covering a set of skills or techniques for a particular field. A survey will be circulated to students to help identify the key skills sought by students and RSRs will collate this information to seek potential candidates to deliver presentations. It was suggested that one post doc could present alongside 4 students per session and RTDRs agreed to assist with identifying postdocs to present.

ACTION: CC to contact RTDRs with further details regarding postdoc participation in Skills Exchange Programme.

<div align="center">vi)   <u>Monthly Bulletin</u></div>

RSRs requested that new students are included in the monthly bulletin so that research and teaching departments are aware of new starters.

ACTION: RDO to liaise with Directors Office for inclusion of new starters in monthly Directors Bulletin. |
| 9 | **EDI and Student Focus Group update**

PM summarised the aims of the EDI committee and provided an update on the Institute's Gold Award for the Athena SWAN application. A Race Equality Group has been created as part of the action plan and the committee will be announced once a Chair has been elected. Following the Institute's Town Hall Meeting on Black Lives Matter, Research and teaching departments are hosting regular discussions very couple of months to collate ongoing feedback. PM confirmed that she will be stepping down as Chair for the EDI Committee at the end of this year and a new Chair will be appointed.

The Student Focus Group has circulated calls for volunteers to join the committee, which aims to improve student experience across ICH, tackling issues such as bullying and harassment. It was reiterated that the student voice is very important in order to put appropriate EDI action plans in place and alternative strategies should be considered to facilitate student engagement if the current approach is not working.

ACTION: CT to arrange meeting with PM / ID to discuss how best to facilitate student engagement with the Student Focus Group and EDI Committee.

<u>BAME funding for PhD Students</u>

Institute has submitted an expression of interest for the UKRI funding call, which is offering £200K - £800K for developing actions to ensure BAME equality. It was reiterated that the student voice will be important to consider in taking actions forward and students will be updated on the progress. |

10	**AOB**
	i) <u>Open Access funding</u>
	PPP have reported issues around Open access funding for NIHR funded research.
	ACTION: PM to discuss Open Access funding issues from BRC perspective with LT.
	ii) <u>PhD Internships</u>
	The PhD Roadmap suggests that students should consider applying for internships towards the end of their first year, and increasingly students choose alternative career paths (e.g. industry, NHS, charities, education) following completion of their PhD. It was suggested that PhDs could incorporate internships for a short and flexible duration (i.e. one month in the first instance), which could benefit both students and the Institute.
	Internships are usually taken up by UKRI funded students whose PhD studentships facilitate paid time for interruptions. BBSRC studentships require students to have 3 month placements, but this is inbuilt into their programme rather than requiring an interruption. Therefore, it would be important to consider how students would be paid if a formal interruption of study is required (i.e. paid placement, scholarships).
	The Careers Forum will take place on 3rd December, which could provide a networking opportunity for PhD Students. RSRs suggested that students are likely to require additional support from the Institute with the logistics of planning an internship (i.e. timing, interruption duration etc.), as well as identifying opportunities available. It is possible that PhD internships could be incorporated into the 'Change Makers' projects. It was agreed that it would be important to discuss the different approaches with Joe Budd, Careers Lead, as well as Mike Rowson.
	ACTION: AS to arrange meeting with Jane Simmonds, Joe Budd and Mike Rowson to discuss potential approaches for PhD internships.
11	**Date of Next Meeting** - Monday 22nd March 2021

Summary of Action Points: Date of Meeting	Item	Action	By Whom	Status
12/11/2019	4	RSRs to feedback any ideas for improved research log functionality to CT.	RSRs	O
		ER to provide CT with student software requirements (which software and why).	ER	O
		CT to discuss with Tansy Jones regarding software issue and investigate whether it is possible to carry out the requests with IT or to consider appropriate funding model.	CT	O
		CT to consider how to manage institute-wide Post Doc support service for PhD students.	CT	O

12/11/2019	**6**	SF to create document that outlines induction roles for Research Degrees Office vs. Research & Teaching Department admin team.	**SF**	**C**
12/11/2019	**8**	CT to collate generic information and materials for the PPP department and store on the shared drive as example material that other departments can refer to for future Open Days.	**CT**	**C**
24/06/2020	**4**	Sophie Bennett to contact Kathryn Hesketh about Post Doc Statistics support and feedback updates to CT.	**SB / KH**	**O**
24/06/2020	**6**	CT to share link to Psychology student well-being support system for students once this becomes available.	**CT**	**O**
09/11/2020	**4**	RSRs to feedback any suggestions for Mentoring Moodle course to AS.	**RSRs**	**O**
09/11/2020	**5**	RDO to circulate i-expenses procedural document once available.	**RDO**	**O**
09/11/2020	**6**	RDO to provide RSRs with link to Annual Monitoring Forms once available for RSRs to provide feedback	**RDO**	**C**
09/11/2020	**7**	CT to discuss with JS about how to approach creating a local database for aligning PhD students to MSc courses for remote teaching.	**CT**	**O**
09/11/2020	**8**	CC to email RTDRs with further details regarding postdoc participation in Skills Exchange Programme.	**CC**	**O**
09/11/2020	**8**	RDO to invite students to attend future events via calendar invitations.	**RDO**	**O**
09/11/2020	**8**	RDO to arrange with Directors Office for new starters to be included in Directors Bulletin.	**RDO**	**C**
09/11/2020	**9**	CT to arrange meeting with PM / ID to discuss how best to facilitate student engagement with the Student Focus Group and EDI Committee.	**CT**	**C**
09/11/2020	**10**	PM to discuss Open Access funding issues from BRC perspective with LT.	**PM**	**O**
09/11/2020	**10**	AS to arrange meeting with Jane Simmonds, Joe Budd and Mike Rowson to discuss potential approaches for PhD internships.	**AS**	**O**