GOS ICH
STAFF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Meeting to be held on

Monday 21st March 2022 at 14.00
Virtual – via Microsoft TEAMS

Minutes

Present:

Prof Claire Thorne, Departmental Graduate Tutor (Research) - Chair
Annie Murphy, Research Degrees Administrator – (Minutes)
Dr Frederique Liegeois, PG 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)
Dr Dagan Jenkins, Postgraduate Research Tutor, Genetics and Genomic
Medicine (GGM)
Prof Mary Fewtrell, Postgraduate Research Tutor, Population, Policy and
Practice (PPP)
Jennie Chandler, RTDR, Developmental Biology & Cancer (DBC)
Rosie Marshall, RTDR, Developmental Biology & Cancer (DBC)
Jeshmi Jeyabalan Srikaran, RTDR, Genetics and Genomic Medicine (GGM)
Raj Rajeev, RTDR, III

Student Representation (RSRs):
Danesh Sundar, RSR, DBC, Year 1
Lauren Russell, RSR, DBC, Year 3
Charlotte Roth, RSR, DN, Year 1
Agnieszka Sierhej, RSR, DN, Year 1
Georgia Stimpson, RSR, DN, Year 2/3
Elizabeth Haughey, RSR, III, Year 1
Machaela Palor, RSR, III, Year 2/3
Alice Burleigh, RSR, III, Year 3
Amanda Clery, RSR, PPP, Year 2/3
Gabriela Toledo, RSR, PPP, Year 2/3
Reem Alkharji, PG Society RSR
Laurette Bukasa, REG RSR
Tahmina Aktar, EDI RSR

Apologies:

Stella Fusco, Senior Research Degrees Administrator
Sophie Bennett, RTDR, Population, Policy and Practice (PPP)
Natasha Schoeler, RTDR, DN
Claudiu Cozmescu – Lead RSR, GGM, Year 3
Loukia Touramanidou, RSR, GGM, Year 2

Alice Stephens, RSR, PPP, Year 1
Renuka Kadirkamanathan, RSR, III, Year 2/3
Antonio Greco, RSR, III, Year 2/3

1	**Welcome and introductions**
	CT welcomed the committee to the meeting.
	SSCC members in attendance: • PGR team • RSRs including PG Society, REG and EDI student representation • Research & Training Department Representatives (RTDRs)
2	**Minutes of the previous meeting 17th November 2021**
	Minutes agreed and approved
3	**Matters Arising from the minutes**
	To be addressed via the Agenda
4	**Student Mentor Meetings – Oral reports by Mentors**
	All departments reported that student mentor meetings had taken place in the first term, either virtually or face-to-face, and further events were planned to take place before Easter. No RSRs were available from GGM to provide an update. A few queries have been received by RSRs regarding the date of the next upgrade workshop. RSRs were reminded that recordings of past workshops are available for students to view on Moodle and details of how to register for the next upgrade workshop would be circulated as soon as the details have been confirmed. A Spring induction is scheduled to take place on 29th March for any new students who were not able to attend the Autumn session.
5	**Recent developments for attention of research students**
	a) Including publications in theses
	An update was provided that the UCL RDC has approved changes to the Academic Manual, which will allow students to incorporate publications in their thesis on the condition that they submit a declaration of contributions (e.g. supervisors, co-authors on papers). Students and supervisors will be notified once the Doctoral School has finalised the updated guidelines, which will be incorporated into the 2022-23 UCL Academic Manual and updated on the Doctoral School webpage in due course. Thanks were given to all students and supervisors who gave their support by signing the open letter which received over 1000 signatures, as well as completing the anonymous student survey. It was noted that students may continue to need some guidance to navigate the grey areas around self-plagiarism issues. It was reiterated that the approved regulation changes would not permit 'PhD by publication'.
	ACTION: Students and supervisors to be notified once updated guidance on including publications in theses has been made available by the Doctoral School (RDO).
	b) PGTA issues including payments
	An update was provided that all PhD students who were owed back payments should have now been paid, but this will need to be cross-checked against the list of students who completed the PGTA survey. There are some ongoing complexities with how teaching payments will be made going forwards as students will now need to be issued with formal

	contracts. For example, further clarification is needed with regards to how students will be paid if they are working less than the minimum of 15 hours required for a contract to be issued. It was suggested that it might be possible for time allocated to teaching preparation and Arena training to be included in order to help students reach the minimum threshold of work hours. Further updates will be provided in due course. **ACTION: List of PhD students who completed PGTA survey to be cross-checked to confirm all PhD students who were owed back payment have now received payments owed to date (RSRs).** c) Auditing access for MSc modules It has been agreed that a Faculty policy will be drafted to formalise the guidance around auditing access. PhD students and Module Leads will be notified once the guidance has been finalised. **ACTION: RDO to be notified once policy guidance on auditing access has been finalised for circulation to PhD students and Module Leads (AS).**

6	**Lead and Deputy Lead Student Rep appointment process / Student Rep roles and responsibilities discussion**
	
	LK has stepped down as Lead RSR for 2021/22 and thanks were given for her hard work and commitment in undertaking a range of projects throughout her time as an RSR, including spearheading the drive for allowing publications to be included in theses.
	
	It was reiterated that it is a UCL requirement for the Department to appoint a Lead RSR, and that a lack of interest in the role in the past has resulted in students being elected to the position without having volunteered first. It is hoped that the introduction of a Deputy Lead RSR position may encourage students to come forward for the Lead RSR role. Although the role is normally undertaken on a 12-month term in line with the academic year, the department would consider appointing a student to the Lead RSR position on a shorter-term basis if required. RSRs proposed that students should be required to put themselves forward for the Lead and any potential Deputy positions before they are nominated by students via a departmental election. Where no expressions of interest are received, it was suggested that picking a random name out of a hat would be a fairer method than automatic nomination.
	
	RSRs were invited to give their feedback on the recruitment process with the aim to have the Lead RSR vacancy filled by the June SSCC meeting. A copy of the draft Deputy Lead RSR role description was circulated to the committee, and potential models of RSR leadership were discussed including:
	   - One Lead RSR and one Deputy Lead RSR
	   - Two Co-Lead RSRs
	   - Creation of one or more new roles to delegate leadership of some specific responsibilities - e.g. 3MT Competition coordinator; GOSICH Poster Competition People's Choice coordinator
	
	It was clarified that although the Deputy Lead RSR may be required to step up on occasion, they would not be automatically nominated as the next Lead RSR. It was agreed that Co-Leads would be the least favourable model as the workload would potentially increase and be difficult to manage and distribute fairly. Another suggestion was to appoint one Lead RSR and create one or more new roles to delegate leadership of some specific responsibilities, e.g. 3MT Competition coordinator; GOSICH Poster Competition People's Choice coordinator. It was agreed that more delegation of tasks should be encouraged given the large number of RSRs at the Institute. This could in turn encourage RSRs to apply for the Lead RSR role as the workload would be fairer and more manageable.

It was suggested that an increase of 1-2 skills training points for students who undertake the Lead RSR position could be an incentive to compensate for time invested in the role. Further clarification is needed about the estimated time required to undertake the role effectively and whether there is any flexibility to amend the number of skill points for RSRs who organise student-related events or activities on an Institute-wide basis.

ACTIONS:

Estimation of time required to carry out the Lead RSR role effectively to be calculated (CC).

Investigate whether there is any flexibility when allocating training points for RSRs who organise student-related events or activities on an Institute-wide basis (SF).

Role descriptions to be reviewed and feedback provided by the return from the Easter break on various models proposed (Deputy, Co-Lead or creation of one or more new roles to delegate leadership of some specific responsibilities) (RSRs).

Follow up meeting to be organised ahead of the June SSCC to finalise the recruitment model once RSR feedback has been collated (RDO).

7	**3MT Competition – 7 April 2022**
	3MT Departmental heats have taken place this term as follows:

- PPP: 2 students participated and will proceed to the Institute Competition.
- III: 4 students participated and 2 will proceed to Institute Competition.
- DN: 2 students participated, and 1 student withdrew; 1 student will proceed to Institute Competition.
- DBC: 2 or 3 students will proceed to Institute Competition.
- GGM: No RSRs were present to provide an update.

The judges for the competition have been confirmed, and it has been agreed that they will not score any of their own students. It was discussed whether DBC could enter up to 3 students into the Institute Competition as 2 students received a very similar score in the departmental heat. For fairness and consistency, it was agreed each department should only be allowed to enter 2 students. This is in line with guidance for the Faculty level competition, which allows each department to enter up to 2 students regardless of the size of department.

The ICH winner from the 2021 3MT Competition has been asked to act as a judge as an action point agreed following the event last year. It was suggested the inclusion of past winners as judges, in place of an academic, could be incorporated into the guidance for future years. RSRs were encouraged to invite a member of Professional Services to act as a judge for the Institute Competition.

It was proposed that the Institute Competition is live streamed to encourage attendance. The Faculty level competition is planned to take place in this format. An email will be circulated to students to confirm the 3MT dates to include the Faculty Competition on 6th May 2022 and the UCL Final on 8th June 2022. The national final will take place online in September 2022.

ACTIONS:
A member of Professional Services to be invited to act as a judge on the panel for the Institute Competition (CT).

	Investigate whether the Leolin Price Lecture Theatre can be setup for live streaming on 7th April 2022 (SF). Follow up meeting to be arranged with RSRs who are leading on organising the 3MT Competition to finalise logistics for the day (CT/SF/AM).
8	**UCL Strategic Plan 2022-27** RECEIVED: Discussion paper five: Education priorities and programmes (Document B) The committee were made aware of a series of discussion papers in relation to the UCL Strategic Plan 2022-27, which are available to view on the [UCL website](#). It was noted that Discussion paper five on Education priorities and programmes is predominantly focussed on Postgraduate Taught Education, however, some PGR students may have views on the proposals made in relation to their involvement in carrying out and supporting teaching. RSRs were asked to disseminate the information to their cohorts, inviting them to review the information available on the UCL website and the Powerpoint circulated, and to feedback through the [consultation site](#), if they wish to do so, within the current consultation phase which runs until April 2022. **ACTION: Information on UCL Strategic Plan 2022-27 to be disseminated to department cohorts, inviting feedback from students, if they wish to do so, via the consultation site within the current consultation phase (RSRs).**
9	**PRES 2021** RECEIVED: Summary of 2021 PRES Results (Document C) The PRES is a National Survey conducted every 2 years and the Doctoral School encourages a response rate of over 50% for each department. ICH achieved a response rate of 64% in 2019, the highest response rate in the Faculty, and higher than ICH's previous response rate of 61% in 2017. A much lower response rate of 46% was achieved in 2021, which was marginally lower than the response rate across Faculty (51%), but equal to the average response rate across UCL. The lower response rates are thought to be predominately the result of survey fatigue in the COVID era. It was acknowledged that the 2021 data may not be representative of the overall cohort and comparable to previous years, given both the low response rate and the impact of the pandemic. Some of the lower scores may reflect exceptional circumstances caused by the pandemic, skewed by the large proportion of lab-based students at ICH, who were significantly impacted by the closure periods and social distancing restrictions in place. It was reiterated that it will take time for any changes implemented to filter through to the results, and therefore some areas for improvement may receive more positive responses in the next PRES survey. For example, it is anticipated that going forwards, the results will show improved scores for 'identifying training and development needs as a researcher' as a result of the introduction of Personal Development Plans and individualised guidance provided by Thesis Committees. It is also expected that responses in relation to paid teaching work, skills training and advice, and development opportunities including access to internships, should improve as a result of the ongoing work being carried out in these areas at Departmental and Faculty level. The Committee were invited to review the summary data and full report of 2021 PRES Results, if they wish, which would be uploaded to the intranet in due course.

	ACTION: 2021 PRES Results and summary data to be uploaded to the intranet (SF).
10	**Cohort Building - Academic and Social Events:** i) Skill Exchange Programme The Skills Exchange Programme was set up as an initiative for PhD students to have the opportunity to learn new skills and network outside of their supervisory team. The programme has received good feedback for the 6 sessions run since October 2021, but currently it is the same students attending each session. RSRs were asked to encourage participation in the programme within their cohorts, especially from within the departments of III and PPP, where there has been little engagement. RSRs were asked to complete the [Skills Exchange Student Feedback form](#) and remind students from within their cohort to complete the survey too. It was reiterated that feedback was welcomed from PhD students who had not attended any sessions to help identify reasons for non-attendance and how engagement could be improved. The first year of the programme cycle is due to finish in June 2022. It was suggested that Deputy roles could be introduced for the next cycle to support the organisation of the programme over the next academic year. **ACTIONS:** **Strategies to be considered to help encourage PhD students to volunteer to present as part of the Skills Exchange Programme (RSRs, RTDRs).** **RSRs to complete the [Skills Exchange Student Feedback](#) form and encourage students within their cohort to complete the survey too (RSRs).** **Expressions of interest for Deputy role in the 2022/23 Skills Exchange Programme to be sent to JC, RM, and CC (RSRs).** ii) Postgraduate Society Update (RA, PG Society RSR) Two student events have been postponed due to covid or other reasons. It is hoped that more face-to-face events will be able to go ahead now that covid-related restrictions have been lifted. Students will be updated on further events planned by the PG Society in due course. iii) CHR PhD Studentships – Meeting between Interview candidates and current students Special thanks were given to the RSRs for their help with meeting the candidates ahead of the CHR PhD Studentships interviews. Candidates were appreciative of the opportunity to ask questions to current students. RK was also given thanks for her help as the student representative on the panel across the two interview days.
11	**GOS ICH Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Race Equity Group update** i) Race Equity Group - Student Representative Feedback (LB, REG RSR) An update was provided that the 12-month action plan for teaching and education has been approved by the Institute Management Team. The PRES Results will be reviewed to identify areas where further data would be helpful to identify race-related issues specific to the PGR cohort.

	The Committee has met with other REG and EDI groups across the Faculty to share knowledge and best practice. One initiative shared by another department was offering a monthly safe space for students, allowing them to join a virtual call anonymously to discuss issues in relation to race, bullying and harassment. The committee were invited to feedback to LB via email or Teams any suggestions for piloting a safe space initiative at ICH with the view to introducing this after the Easter break. **ACTION: Suggestions for piloting a student safe space initiative at ICH to be sent to LB via email or Teams (RSRs).** ii) EDI Committee - Student Representative Feedback (TA, EDI RSR) The Committee has reached out to PhD students who are parents to feedback on issues related to balancing studies with childcare responsibilities. A total of 4 students responded. A meeting will be organised with the EDI Chair to follow up in response to the constructive feedback given by 2 students. The Committee were invited to feedback any suggestions for how to encourage student engagement with the EDI Committee. It was noted that students often interrupt their studies as maternity/paternity leave and the low response rate could be due to the fact that parents are likely to have less free time to engage in additional activities outside of their studies. RSRs were asked to encourage PhD students to get in contact with TA if they are parents, so that feedback can be provided to the UCL EDI Committee. It was suggested that alumni could also be contacted for their feedback. **ACTION:** **Students who are parents to be encouraged to get in contact with TA to provide feedback on balancing PhD studies with childcare responsibilities (RSRs).** **Suggestions about how to get in contact with alumni to be provided to TA (CT).**
12	**AOB** Covid-related funding extensions for 3rd year students RSRs requested clarification on whether funding extensions will be available for funded students who were in their first year during the closure periods in 2020 and whose funding ends beyond 31 March 2022, which is currently not covered by the UCL Stipend Extension Scheme (SES). It was confirmed that it is not yet known whether the UCL SES will be extended to cover students who were in their first year in March 2020, but it is expected that these students would have to make a strong case for why a funding extension is required. **ACTION: RSRs to direct funded students to contact the GOS ICH Research Degrees Office with their funding details for advice on possible stipend extension options available (RSRs).**
13	**Date of Next Meeting** – 13 June 2022, 2pm

Summary of Action Points: Date of Meeting	Item	Action	By Whom	Status
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	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	10	PM to discuss Open Access funding issues from BRC perspective with LT.	PM	O
24/03/2021	5 i)	CT/RDO to contact Kasia Bronk (Acting Head Researcher Experience) to make the requests regarding a course listings/directory and Bloomsbury PG Network courses to be added on Inkpath.	CT, RDO	O
24/03/2021	7 ii) b)	CT to contact Grazia Manzotti for clarification about open access publishing process and where to find information about which publishers have open access publishing agreements in place with UCL.	CT	O
24/03/2021	7 iii)	AS to raise MSc auditing issue with Doctoral School.	AS	O
24/03/2021	7 iv)	AS to discuss RSR feedback on thesis publications at Faculty level and with the Doctoral School.	AS	C
24/03/2021	9	CT to ask Ludi Capelan about potential for reinstating GOS ICH workshops about how to deal with bullying in the workplace.	CT	O
14/06/2021	6	Email reminder to students about the departmental open-door policy.	PG Tutors	O
		Faculty TC guidance to be forwarded onto RSRs for comments once updated guidance is available.	AS	C
		Document B to be revised with details of where reports should be submitted and/or uploaded with hyperlinks to online forms, where applicable, and revised version to be circulated to students and supervisors once finalised.	SF, RDO	C
14/06/2021	7 a)	RSRs to contact the EDI Wellbeing Focus Group for advice on running wellbeing events.	RSRs	O
		RSRs to provide SF with a proposal of student events with an indication of whether they are academic, social, or a mix of both, as well as an estimate of cost per event.	RSRs	C

14/06/2021	7 b) i)	Online survey to be made available for sharing, and Chloe Li, Faculty RSR, to be contacted to facilitate circulation of student survey across the Faculty.	LK, CC	C
		Student feedback regarding theses including publications to be discussed with the Doctoral School and raised at UCL RDC.	AS	C
		An open letter to be drafted for circulation to supervisors, subject to approval by CT, to gauge whether senior staff agree that students should be able to include their own publications in the main body of their thesis, and to gather insights about their experience of this issue in other universities.	RSRs, CT	C
		Clarification to be sought about processes at LSHTM for including publications in main body of thesis, and the distinction in approval processes between open and closed access journals.	LW	C
17/11/2021	5 a)	Including publications in thesis to be added to agenda for updates at next SSCC meeting.	AM	C
17/11/2021	5 b)	PGTA survey to be re-circulated to PhD students with an extended deadline of Monday 22nd November 2021. Announcement to be made on the PG Moodle page to remind students to complete the survey.	SF	C
17/11/2021	5 c)	RSRs to provide feedback to JS on which types of MSc auditing access are most appropriate to meet the needs of PhD students so that this information can be shared with Module Leads.	RSRs	O
		JS to ask Sarah Bathie to contact Module Leads in relation to providing confirmation that their MSc modules can be audited and which types of auditing access are available for each module.	JS	O
17/11/2021	8 ii)	QR codes for the student social groups on Whatsapp to be advertised via posters and Moodle.	RSRs	O
17/11/2021	8 iii)	Strategies to be considered to help encourage PhD students to participate in the skills talks as part of the Skills Exchange Programme.	RSRs, RTDRs	O
17/11/2021	8 iv)	Institute level 3MT competition date to be circulated as calendar invitation once date is finalised.	SF	C
		Strategies to encourage male contestant participation to be considered.	RSRs	O
17/11/2021	8 v)	Email to be circulated to RSRs to recruit one volunteer from each R&T department to help with the organisation of social events.	RA	O

17/11/2021	8 vi)	Certificates for outstanding contributions to be awarded to Lucy Karwatowska, Gabriela Toledo, Emeline Rougeaux, Amanda Clery, Antonio Greco and Fatimah Almousawi.	CT, SF, RDO	C
17/11/2021	9 ii)	Email requesting expressions of interest for EDI roles to be circulated to students via RDO.	TA	O
17/11/2021	10	Division of Lead and Deputy Lead responsibilities to be discussed and a Deputy Lead role description to be drafted for approval by CT.	LK, CC, CT	C
		A call for expressions of interest for the Deputy Lead position to be circulated to RSRs once the role description and recruitment process has been finalised.	RDO	O
21/03/2022	5 a)	Students and supervisors to be notified once updated guidance on including publications in theses has been made available by the Doctoral School.	RDO	O
	5 b)	List of PhD students who completed PGTA survey to be cross-checked to confirm all PhD students who were owed back payment have now received payments owed to date.	RSRs	O
	5 c)	RDO to be notified once policy guidance on auditing access has been finalised for circulation to PhD students and Module Leads.	AS	O
21/03/2022	6	Estimation of time required to carry out the Lead RSR role effectively to be calculated.	CC	O
		Investigate whether there is any flexibility when allocating training points for RSRs who organise student-related events or activities on an Institute-wide basis.	SF	O
		Role descriptions to be reviewed and feedback provided by the return from the Easter break on various models proposed.	RSRs	O
		Follow up meeting to be organised ahead of the June SSCC to finalise the recruitment model once RSR feedback has been collated.	RDO	O
21/03/2022	7	A member of Professional Services to be invited to act as a judge on the panel for the Institute Competition.	CT	C
		Investigate whether the Leolin Price Lecture Theatre can be setup for live streaming on 7th April 2022.	SF	C
		Meeting to be arranged with RSRs who are leading on organising the 3MT Competition to finalise logistics for the day.	CT, SF, AM	C
21/03/2022	8	Information on UCL Strategic Plan 2022-27 to be disseminated to cohorts, inviting feedback from		

		students, if they wish to do so, via the consultation site within the current consultation phase.	**RSRs**	**O**
21/03/2022	9	2021 PRES Results and summary data to be uploaded to the intranet.	**SF**	**C**
21/03/2022	10 i)	Strategies to be considered to help encourage PhD students to volunteer to present as part of the Skills Exchange Programme.	RSRs, RTDRs	**O**
		RSRs to complete the [Skills Exchange Student Feedback form](#) and encourage students within their cohort to complete it too.	RSRs	**O**
		Expressions of interest for 2022/23 Deputy role in the Skills Exchange Programme to be sent via email to JC, RM, and CC.	RSRs	**O**
21/03/2022	11 i)	Suggestions for piloting a student safe space initiative at ICH to be sent to LB via email or Teams.	**RSRs**	**O**
	11 ii)	Students who are parents to be encouraged to get in contact with TA to provide feedback on balancing PhD studies with childcare responsibilities.	**RSRs**	**O**
		Suggestions about how to contact alumni to be provided to TA.	**CT**	**C**
21/03/2022	12	RSRs to direct funded students to contact the GOS ICH Research Degrees Office with details about their funding for advice on possible stipend extension options available.	**RSRs**	**O**