GOS ICH
STAFF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Meeting to be held on

Monday 22ⁿᵈ March 2021 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)
Sophie Bennett, RTDR, Population, Policy and Practice (PPP)
Liam Ridge, RTDR, Developmental Biology & Cancer (DBC)
Jennie Chandler, RTDR, Developmental Biology & Cancer (DBC)
Rosie Marshall, 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
Antonio Greco, RSR, III, Year 1
Alice Burleigh, RSR, III, Year 2
Remi Looi Somoye, RSR, DBC, Year 3
Georgia Stimpson, RSR, DN, Year 1
Clarissa Sorger, RSR, DN, Year 2/3
Gabriela Toledo, RSR, PPP, Year 2
Amanda Clery, RSR, PPP, Year 1
Lucy Karwatowska, RSR, PPP, Year 2
Gabriela Toledo, RSR, PPP, Year 2
Emeline Rougeaux RSR, PPP, Year 3

Apologies:

Jeshmi Jeyabalan Srikaran, RTDR, Genetics and Genomic Medicine (GGM)
Raj Rajeev, RTDR, Infection, Immunity, Inflammation (III)
Natasha Schoeler, RTDR, Developmental Neurosciences (DN)
Professor Mary Fewtrell, Postgraduate Research Tutor, Population, Policy and Practice (PPP)
Farah Alam, RSR, DBC, Year 1
Raasib Mahmood, RSR, DBC, Year 2
Nicole Filipow, RSR, III, Year 2
Kerry-Anne Kite, RSR, III, Year 3

1	**Welcome and introductions**
	CC and CT welcomed the new committee members who joined since the last meeting. - Antonio Greco – 1st year student, III - Jennie Chandler – RTDR, DBC - Rosie Marshall – RTDR, DBC
2	**Minutes of the previous meeting 9ᵗʰ November 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** The main concern raised across departments was isolation due to remote working, especially for new starters. It was noted mid-year starters may feel especially isolated if they had missed out on the induction events. It was acknowledged that not every student responds to emails or event invitations from the RSRs and it can only be assumed that these students are settling in well at the Institute and have no major issues to report.
5	**Recent developments for attention of research students** i) Research Log and Inkpath - Integration works RSRs reported various technical difficulties with the InkPath system, notably the search tool function, and requested whether user friendly guidance could be made available for students. Some courses require students to sign in via several portals to join a session and the QR code for students to confirm their attendance does not always appear. Strikes for non–attendance due to technical glitches have been a recurring issue. In addition, course administrators are not able to amend access information such as Zoom links and authentication codes in order to assist students joining sessions. It was noted that a student complaint is being escalated via Faculty to address the above issues with the Inkpath system. It was reported that the course listings on the Doctoral School webpage have been removed and a similar course directory, listing courses by category/topic, would be useful to signpost students to relevant courses. It was requested whether the Bloomsbury PG Network courses could also be added on Inkpath. It was confirmed that the Inkpath and Research Log integration works are due to be completed after Easter. RSRs were reminded that it will be important for students to

keep an eye on whether the integration has been successful to enable students to backdate training courses completed in the interim.

ACTION: Contact Kasia Bronk (Acting Head Researcher Experience) to make the requests above regarding course listings/directory and Bloomsbury PG Network courses (CT/RDO).

ii) PRES 2021

RSRs were reminded to encourage student cohorts to complete the PRES 2021. The department has achieved a good response rate in the past and would like to exceed the 64% return achieved last time. The issue around "survey fatigue" was acknowledged. However, it was reiterated that the data will be particularly important to reflect on an exceptional year with covid-specific questions included in the survey. As a further incentive, for every 10 responses received, the Doctoral School are planting a tree through the World Land Trust. The survey will close on 16th April 2021.

RSR were also reminded to encourage their student cohorts to complete the Institute EDI survey, which closes on 31st March 2021.

ACTION: RSRs to encourage student cohorts to complete PRES 2021 and ICH EDI Survey by the respective closing dates.

iii) Update on funding extensions and other Doctoral School activities

a. UKRI funded students

Applications are now closed for the UKRI Phase 2 funding extensions. The applications are being processed by central UCL and students will be notified of the outcome of their application in due course.

b. CHR CIO funded students (GOS ICH PhD Studentship Scheme)

A funding bid has been submitted to the Board of Trustees to allow CIO-funded students to apply for up to 3 months additional funding. This is in addition to the 3 months approved for first and second year students in April 2020. Students will be kept informed of developments following the Trustees meeting due to be held in May.

c. UCL Stipend Extension Scheme

The UCL Doctoral School has submitted a proposal for a funding package for students who are entering into their final year with effect from 31st March 2021 to cover stipend extensions of up to 3 months. It is anticipated that the application process will remain the same as last year; students will be required to provide justification for the extension request and supervisors will need to provide evidence that funders are not able to provide further funding. It was confirmed the funding extensions would cover the stipend only; students will be expected to transfer into CRS at the usual time so tuition fees will not be charged beyond this point. Once financial approval has been confirmed, students and supervisors will be notified about the application process and eligibility criteria, and the UCL Doctoral School webpage will be updated accordingly.

ACTIONS: Communication to students and supervisors once UCL stipend extension funding is confirmed and to the CIO-funded students and supervisors once CIO Trustee meeting decisions have been communicated to the RDO (CT/RDO).

6	**Thesis Committees and Annual Monitoring process - Update and changes to process for 2021-22** There are some proposed changes for the annual monitoring process going forwards in light of the introduction of Thesis Committees. Historically students registered for over 6 months are invited to participate in the annual monitoring process with tutor meetings taking place between January and March each year. Since Thesis Committees have been introduced to focus on academic progress, the PG tutor role will transition into a personal tutor role focusing on pastoral care only. The PG team have discussed streamlining the annual monitoring process further in line with TCs, such that new students meet with their postgraduate tutor in the early stages of their registration. It is proposed that the initial questionnaire normally completed by students at around 4 months registration is replaced by an early tutor meeting to ensure that new students are settling in well at the Institute. This will allow students to build a personal relationship with their postgraduate tutor in the early stages of their registration. Further to previous discussions around reducing the frequency and duplication of monitoring reports, it was requested whether the e-log timeline could be amended to require less frequent review points. However, it was reiterated that students are required to meet with their supervisor at least once a month, and the regular review time-points are an important mechanism to prompt formal supervisory meetings to take place, especially in the early stages of research. Furthermore, the review points act as a safety net to alert the department to cases where issues are occurring and regular supervision meetings are not happening. It was noted that as stated in the guidelines, TC chairs should provide the opportunity for students to have a confidential 1-2-1 discussion at the end of a meeting to raise and discuss any matters of a confidential nature, if necessary. It was reiterated that any serious issues or concerns should be escalated to Claire Thorne as DGT. It was clarified that the primary supervisor should only attend the first TC meeting and can provide assistance to guide the discussion in this meeting where appropriate. Further discussions around TCs are ongoing at Faculty level and SLMS may be required to feedback on TCs in the near future. In the long term, the proposal is to merge the e-log and TC review points, but careful consideration needs to be made to the distinction in processes (i.e. the primary supervisor is not involved in the TC meetings). It was clarified that UCL-wide changes cannot be made to the e-log at this stage as TCs have only been rolled out in SLMS so far. Overall, it was agreed that the role of both the TC and PG tutor are necessary in the monitoring of student progress and new students would benefit from establishing a relationship with their PG tutor in the early stages of their registration. It was agreed that a document should be drafted to clearly outline the division of responsibility in monitoring student progress between the TC, PG Tutor and e-log, and the proposed changes for annual monitoring process for the next academic year. **ACTION: RDO to circulate outline of proposed changes and division of responsibility for the annual monitoring process once available for RSRs to feedback.**
7	**PGR feedback, including COVID-19-related issues:** i) Supervisory support, remote working issues, wellbeing RSRs were reminded that annual monitoring tutor meetings are currently taking place, where students can raise any specific issues with their PG tutor for guidance and support. It was acknowledged that it has been a year since students began working

remotely, and there are likely to be growing anxieties about research progress. RSRs were asked to encourage students to contact the PGR team if they are experiencing problems and require any additional support.

    ii)   Student finances

        a.   Impact of COVID for external funded PhD students

RSRs requested clarification on the process for students to formally record and inform examiners about covid-related delays to research. It was confirmed that the Doctoral School are drafting a proforma for students to complete with objective statements about how the direction of their research has changed in response to the impact of the delays caused by the pandemic. Students should submit the proforma, co-signed by the supervisor, as a separate document to accompany the thesis. It was reiterated that the quality of the thesis must be upheld to PhD standard in all cases and submission of the proforma will by no means be considered as extenuating circumstances.

ACTION: The proforma will be circulated to students and supervisors once the final version is received from the Doctoral School (RDO).

        b.   Funding for publishing articles in open access journals

NIHR funded students are not granted funding for open access publishing which is costly. It was requested whether the process can be made fairer to enable more students to publish in open access journals, particularly as consumables and discretionary funds are not available to all students. Although UCL places huge emphasis on open access, the process for securing the funding seems unclear and disconnected. However, there are some UCL agreements in place for the publishing fees to be included with certain publishers (e.g. Wilely journals). It was confirmed there is no policy or funding in place at a Faculty level, and it was agreed that further clarification about the inconsistences in the process is required. It was agreed that Grazia Manzotti, ICH Librarian, should be contacted in the first instance to advise on the open access publishing process and where to signpost students for information on the UCL agreements in place with publishers.

ACTION: CT to contact Grazia Manzotti for clarification about the open access publishing process and where to find information about which publishers have open access agreements in place with UCL

        c.   iExpenses and Student Finances

RSRs reported ongoing issues with the i-expenses system and the timely processing of expense claims. RSRs were updated that a new institute policy has been drafted for new students to be setup by default with access to MyFinance (i-expenses and consumables funds), unless arranged otherwise by the supervisor. The draft policy will be circulated to students and supervisors once approved by the R&T Department admin teams.

It was noted that students need access to both i-expenses and consumables funds, and the latter will not be available until research projects have been granted full R&D approval. RSRs reported that the access issue in some cases is due to an extensive backlog of administrative delays in R&D approval. It was advised that in such cases, students should follow up with their supervisors to ensure that any outstanding paperwork is submitted for full approval to be granted as soon as possible.

Students and supervisors will be notified once the new policy has been fully approved; until this point the ICH Finance will remain the main point of contact for queries. Once the policy has been approved, students should approach their R&T Departmental admin team with any queries relating to i-expense claims. The ICH Finance team will need to advise regarding any delays with processing expense claims, but RSRs were reassured that payments can be backdated beyond the 3-month policy limit where there have been administration delays.

ACTION: SF to follow up with R&T Department admin teams about draft i-expenses policy for circulation once approved.

UPDATE post meeting: The new i-expenses policy has been approved and circulated.

iii)   Auditing MSc Courses

RSRs reported ongoing issues around permission to audit MSc courses and access to the relevant materials on Moodle. It was requested whether a specific number of places per course could be allocated by default for PhD students to be offered on a first come first serve basis. It was suggested that a clear definition for MSc auditing is required for transparency to Module Leads about the purpose of PhD students attending courses. It was clarified that there should be no requirement for PhD students to attend MSc courses specifically for the purpose of marking.

It was noted that previously there was no role assigned on Moodle for students to access materials as an 'auditor'; this has been recently added to the system. Following on from discussions at Faculty level, the reasons for students being denied access for auditing MSc courses is not entirely clear as there are currently no physical capacity issues due to the remote nature of courses. There may be some concerns over PhD students dominating participation in teaching, however, Module Leads can manage this with simple rules for PhD students to follow. Going forwards, capacity issues will need to be carefully considered in the view of courses returning to face to face teaching – for example, room bookings could take into account a small number of places (e.g. 10%) for PhD students who wish to attend for auditing.

It was suggested that an email could be sent to MSc Course Leads to collate information about the different levels of auditing available for specific modules (i.e. full or partial access to teaching and materials). This information would provide students with an overview of what is available without students having to contact individual Module Leads. An example of this data is available at IGH, where there is a policy in place that all MSc modules can be audited.

ACTION: RSRs to provide to CT a list of modules / course leads / Institutes where PhD students have not been given access to teaching and materials in order for this to be escalated to Directors of Education.

ACTION: AS to raise issue of MSc auditing with the Doctoral School.

iv)   Incorporating publications into PhD theses

The UCL Doctoral School handbook advises students that if they wish to include their own publication in their thesis, it must be re-written in order to be included in the main body of the text. If students wish to include the original publication, the PDF must be included within the appendices. It was noted that other universities are more lenient towards students including their own publications within the main body of their thesis. For example, in some cases, a statement is provided at the beginning of the thesis or each chapter to declare contributions to the work. RSRs reiterated that the task of re-

writing publications is very time consuming and therefore requested whether a case could be put forward for the relevant section of the Doctoral School handbook to be changed.

CT clarified that the issue also relates to copyright, which is an additional complicating factor. It was reiterated that the Institute cannot request for changes to be made to the handbook, which is based on regulations of the award of a degree at a University level. However, it was agreed that student feedback should be collated in the form of a brief paper to be presented to Faculty and the Doctoral School, which should include a comparison of UCL to other University models. It was noted that the paper could highlight that the climate for publishing has changed in current times with protocol papers becoming more common, for example.

It was noted that the issues raised about the wording of the section on self-plagiarism has been formally noted at UCL level, and although linked, the issue of students including their own publications in their thesis is a separate issue.

ACTIONS: RSRs to prepare a brief paper on incorporating publications into PhD theses. RDO to forward this to the Doctoral School. AS to discuss feedback at Faculty level and with the Doctoral School.

8	**Cohort Building - Academic and Social Events:**
	i) Skill Exchange Programme – RSR update

No update – item to be added to agenda for next SSCC meeting.

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

    ii)   3MT

It was confirmed 12 participants are signed up to the ICH 3MT competition due to take place on 20th April. A practice session is scheduled to take place on 23rd March as departmental heats did not take place.

    iii)   Postgraduate Society

A call for the following two positions has been circulated, which close to expressions of interest on 31 March 2021.

        a) Postgraduate Society Representative
        b) Equality Diversity and Inclusion PhD Student Representative

RSRs would like to continue having 1 RSR per department to assist with organising social events. To address issues around student isolation, it has been proposed that a coffee meeting is organised every 2 weeks, to be attended by at least one RSR.

    iv)   CHR PhD Studentships

Special thanks were given to the RSRs for their help with meeting the interview candidates for the CHR PhD Studentships. Candidates were appreciative of the opportunity to ask questions to current students and it was agreed that these sessions should continue in the future.

9	**EDI and Student Focus Group update**
	The Student Focus Group is no longer running due to a lack of student interest in involvement in the EDI committee. A call for expressions of interest has been circulated for a student rep to act as a link between the EDI Committee and SSCC meeting to tackle issues such as bullying. It was confirmed that interest has been shown in the role, but the committee will be updated on this once the deadline for expressions of interest has passed. It was noted that PhD students or early career researchers may also be interested in joining future UCL working groups in relation to the UKRI funding bid to improve access and participation in PGR study for students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.
	It was confirmed that Laurette Bukasa has been appointed as the Student Representative for the Race Equity Group and she will be invited to attend future SSCC meetings.
	ACTION: AM to invite Laurette Bukasa to next SSCC meeting in June 2021.
	Following on from Institute level discussions around bullying, RSRs suggested that workshops about how to deal with bullying in the workplace should be re-introduced to re-align staff and students from different cultures to the same UCL standards.
	ACTION: CT to ask Ludi Capelan about potential for reinstating workshops at GOS ICH.
10	**AOB**
	i) Directors' Bulletin – PhD Student New starter information
	Information on new starters are now included in the Director's monthly bulletin, to include the students research and teaching department and registration start date.
	ii) IRIS profiles
	The pilot for IRIS profiles for PhD students has been delayed, however, the Doctoral School have confirmed this is now scheduled to be rolled out in waves by the start of the next academic year. The department will continue to follow up on the progress of this with the Doctoral School and students will be kept informed of any developments.
	UPDATE post meeting: the IRIS profiles are now being tested at the Institute of Education and plan above is confirmed.
	iii) Payment for teaching support
	RSRs reported inconsistencies with hourly rates received for teaching support across different courses, and between positions advertised by UCL and Unitemps. It was also noted that there have been issues around timely processing of payments. In some cases, students have received no payment and felt pressurised into continuing the work as a voluntary role. It was reiterated that it is Faculty policy that students must be paid for all teaching support, and students should ensure that the payment rate and hours are agreed upfront with the Module Lead. In cases where payment is not received, students should report to the Course Director as a first point of call, or they can pass on the information to the PGR team for their support with the matter.

	ACTION: CT to contact Helen Bedford and Angie Wade (Co-Directors of Education) to draw their attention to the ongoing problem and to reach an Institute-level solution to prevent the inconsistencies with PhD teaching support payment	
11	**Date of Next Meeting** - Monday 14th June 2021	

Summary of Action Points: Date of Meeting	Item	Action	By Whom	Status
12/11/2019	4	ER to provide CT with student software requirements (which software and why). 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 to consider how to manage institute-wide Post Doc support service for PhD students.	**ER** **CT** **CT**	**O** **O** **O**
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	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**
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**
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	5 ii)	RSRs to encourage student cohorts to complete PRES 2021 and ICH EDI Survey.	**RSRs**	**O**
24/03/2021	5 iii) c)	Communication to students and supervisors to take place once UCL stipend extension funding is confirmed and to the CIO-funded students and supervisors once CIO Trustee	**CT / RDO**	**O**

		meeting decisions have been communicated to the RDO.		
24/03/2021	6	RDO to circulate outline of proposed changes and division of responsibility for the annual monitoring process once available for RSRs to feedback.	**RDO**	**O**
24/03/2021	7) ii) a)	RDO to circulate thesis proforma for covid related research delays to students and supervisors once the final version is received from the Doctoral School.	**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 ii) c)	SF to follow up approval of draft i-expenses policy with R&T Department admin teams for circulation once approved.	**SF**	**C**
24/03/2021	7 iii)	RSRs to provide to CT a list of modules / course leads / Institutes where PhD students have not been given access to teaching and materials in order for this to be escalated to Directors of Education. AS to raise issue of MSc auditing with the Doctoral School.	**RSRs** **AS**	**O** **O**
24/03/2021	7 iv)	RSRs to prepare a brief paper on incorporating publications into PhD theses for RDO to forward to the Doctoral School. AS to discuss RSR feedback on thesis publications at Faculty level and with the Doctoral School.	**RSRs / RDO** **AS**	**O** **O**
24/03/2021	8 i)	CC to contact RTDRs regarding postdoc participation in Skills Exchange Programme.	**CC**	**O**
24/03/2021	9	AM to invite Laurette Bukasa to next SSCC meeting in June 2021.	**AM**	**O**
24/03/2021	9	CT to ask Ludi Capelan about potential for reinstating workshops at GOS ICH.	**CT**	**O**
24/03/2021	10 iii)	CT to contact Helen Bedford and Angie Wade (Co-Directors of Education) to draw their attention to the ongoing problem and to reach an Institute-level solution to prevent the inconsistencies with PhD teaching support payment.	**CT**	**O**