Research Studentship Contracts – “How to Guide” for UCL Staff

1. What are research studentship contracts?

- Research Studentship contracts (commonly “Studentship Agreements”) are the agreements by which UCL accepts funding and other contribution from an external collaborator for the purpose of supporting doctoral candidates (PhD, D.Phil, Eng.D etc.) on a specific project.
- These agreements may originate from industrial partners, UK government departments, charities or other organisations.
- Such collaborators may fund such project(s) either fully or partially, with the latter potentially as a top-up contribution in addition to Research Council schemes or other sources of matching funding (e.g. the UCL IMPACT Studentship scheme).

2. Why is this for me?

- UCL is at the forefront of pioneering, interdisciplinary research. With 9 prestigious EPSRC centres of Doctoral Training (CDTs), UCL has the largest allocation of RCUK studentship funding of any UK University. This provides the best possible platform from which to seek external collaborators for studentships.
- Supervising post-graduate students is an important part of UCL’s academic mission, as well as in the career development of individual researchers and academics. It contributes both to knowledge transfer activity and is a vital undertaking in order to prepare the next generation of academics and entrepreneurs.
- Studentships are valuable for training future researchers, furthering current research interests and exploring new areas of basic and applied knowledge.
- Studentships are also particularly attractive to external funders who are new to working with universities, including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This is part due to the generally more manageable scale of studentships, when compared with larger research projects (which can include multiple parties), as well as the clearly defined part-funded schemes (Industrial CASE, Eng.D, DHPA etc.); the opportunity to find potential future employees with specialist knowledge and the tax benefits of undertaking work with universities, including R&D Tax Credits.
- The value of collaborating with SMEs and other industrial partners is outlined in the Industry Research Contracts – How To Guide for UCL Staff.
- Note: Quality-related Research funding (QR) is available for all industrial and most charitable funding contributions for university research, including studentships. QR can boost the cash value of the cash contribution from such funders by as much as 25%.

3. Who can I talk to?

The Research Contracts team in the Pre-Award Section of Research Services is responsible for preparing and negotiating student agreement with external collaborators on behalf of UCL. You can find your department’s Contracts Manager here and a full list of Pre-Award contacts for each UCL department can be found here. Research Services also manages all research council funding pools (CDTs, DTCs etc.) and can be contacted here for enquiries relating to allocation of such funds to your proposed studentship project.
4. **What should I expect?**

- This depends upon the funding route selected for your proposed studentship. Assuming you are seeking 100% of the required funding from a third party, it is likely that a contract will be needed where the funding is not being provided in the form of an unrestricted grant or donation.

- For part-funded schemes such as UCL IMPACT, CASE, DHPA, EngD etc. will also usually require a contracts where new matching funding is provided from an external source (industry, government, charity etc.). Please contact your Contracts Manager for advice if you are unsure about what contractual arrangements may be appropriate.

- The contracting process is the same for fully and partially funded studentship agreements, and research contracts more generally:

  **Step 1 – Preparation**
  - (Identification of collaborator / outline project by PI, possibly supported by UCL CDT Manager and/or other UCL liaison staff – School Research Facilitator, Business Development / Enterprise Officer)
  - Discuss with your Contracts Manager / provide background information (CIF) and funder contribution (PBA)
  - Your Contracts Manager will undertake internal diligence checks and prepare the appropriate UCL template, or make an initial review of terms offered by funder in order to advise you

  **Step 2 – Negotiation**
  - Your Contracts Manager will discuss the proposed terms / suggested changes with funder – this may include negotiation on performance, contract price, IP rights, publications (including theses), liability provisions, timing of payment etc. where appropriate
  - Your Contracts Manager will consult with you and your department and advise on pertinent issues throughout the negotiation process, in order to allow informed decisions to be made. The aim is to reach a mutually acceptable position for UCL and the funder that is fit for purpose, within a reasonable timeframe

  **Step 3 – Finalisation**
  - Once terms are agreed in principle and any authorisations and consents are in place (e.g. ethical approval, Dean of Faculty approval, where appropriate) your Contracts Manager will co-ordinate the signature process
  - After signature process is complete the file is updated and passed for FIS account activation. You will then receive an email from Research Services announcing the account code, with a scanned copy of the agreement attached

**Note:** For jointly-funded studentships, you will receive one account code for each funding source.
5. What do I do next?

- For more information on opportunities for Studentships you can contact your School Research Facilitator (funding opportunities & strategy); Research Services (funding opportunities, contracts and studentship funding team); see RCUK websites or approach UCL Enterprise.

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<th>PLEASE DO</th>
<th>PLEASE DON’T</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Contact the Contracts Manager responsible for your Department at an early stage</td>
<td>x Disclose any valuable information relating to your background IP – in particular if it has been subject to any previous patents and/or license or other agreements</td>
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<td>✓ Consider putting in place a Confidentiality Disclosure Agreement (CDA) with your collaborator(s) before undertaking any detailed discussions on proposed projects – your Contracts Manager will be able to advise and provide suitable documentation</td>
<td>x Agree the price of your contract with the funder until a UCL costing has been approved</td>
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<td>✓ Discuss the research project details with your collaborator(s) in order that all parties are clear about their respective contributions, expectations and activities</td>
<td>x Agree to assign or otherwise commit any arising IP from the project until you have discussed the details of the project with your Contracts Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Ensure that you discuss the contract price with your Contracts Manager</td>
<td>x Agree any restrictions on your rights to publish until you have discussed the details of the project with your Contracts Manager</td>
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<td>✓ Set a realistic time frame for the start date and delivery of the project</td>
<td>x Sign any agreements on behalf of UCL as the legal party</td>
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<td>✓ Make sure that you and your Contracts Manager are aware of any deadlines for conclusion of the studentship contract</td>
<td>x Provide any template agreements to your collaborator unless agreed with your Contracts Manager</td>
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<td>✓ Provide your Contract Manager with all necessary information/contacts, ideally by completion of a Contract Information Form</td>
<td>x Assume that UCL can accept the same terms for a new project that may have been agreed under a previous arrangement with the same collaborator</td>
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Please Note:

- Studentships, like all research contracts, can take variable amounts of time to complete, depending upon the context. This can be a few weeks or even months in some cases, but in general studentships can be completed fairly quickly, provided that all relevant background information has been disclosed to your Contracts Manager as early as possible. The Research Contracts team aims to get each contract finalised as soon as possible (and within 90 days of receiving all the required information from the PI in the majority of cases).

- The overall time required also depends on whether UCL’s template is utilised, as well as how speedily the external funder turns around the agreement under discussion. This can vary on a case by case basis, due to the funder’s internal administrative processes and/or the need to seek external legal advice. Your Contracts Manager represents a sole point of contact for both you and the funder, which generally simplifies the contracting process at UCL’s end.

For more information see the Research Services Documents Page or speak with your Contracts Manager.