

## Faculty Doctoral Strategies

# Faculty of Laws – Executive Summary

The UCL Laws Faculty is recognised as one of the leading providers of doctoral education in Law in the UK, with an excellent international reputation. Given the breadth and depth of academic expertise in the UCL Laws Faculty, we are able to provide doctoral education in almost all areas of law, including theoretical, doctrinal and applied. We place real emphasis in interdisciplinarity, and the Faculty has been at the forefront of the movement to increase capacity in areas of legal research that are widely recognised as under-represented in the UK (and in some cases internationally as well). This includes areas such as empirical legal studies, judicial studies, private law, legal ethics and public health law. Most of these are cross-disciplinary areas of research or areas with a strong application to legal policy and practice and therefore generate a high level of real world impact. This doctoral education strategy is supported by a highly developed level of expertise in these areas in the Laws Faculty (from junior to senior academics), helping to create a unique identity in legal research amongst Law Schools in the UK.

The UCL Laws Faculty was rated the number 1 Law School in the UK in REF 2014 for its Research Environment, and the only UK Law Faculty to have its Research Environment rated 100% 4\*. We provide an environment that is conducive to producing research of world-leading quality in terms of our vitality and sustainability.

Our Faculty Doctoral Plan reinforces the Faculty's strategic teaching priorities:

- Recruit top quality students
- Maintain and advance the learning environment
- Strengthen the quality of all aspects of our students' experience
- Improve our feedback systems to monitor the efficacy of student focused activities.

## Distinctive Features / Best Practice

### PhD Funding by the Laws Faculty

The Laws Faculty now offers full scholarships to almost all research students to whom we make offers of admission to each year. We are able to do this as a result of (1) increased philanthropic funding for PhD students in specific areas of legal research (private law, intellectual property), (2) increased faculty support for PhD research, and (3) increasing success on the part of those we accept in securing RCUK funding for their research. Faculty-based scholarships include:

- Faculty Research Scholarships (FRS) (4 available per annum)
- Peter Birks Scholarships in Private Law
- Intellectual Property Scholarship

We have also ensured that all our scholarship holders have an annual stipend that is among the highest in law in the UK. This has resulted in our FRS stipend increasing to £18,000 per annum and the Laws Faculty supplementing all RCUK scholarship holders' stipends so they too receive a total of £18,000 per annum.

When making awards the Laws PhD Scholarship Team considers the distribution across a range of subject area specialisations, including those where there is a known deficit in expertise nationally and internationally and/or where the faculty has specific expertise, including amongst more junior academics, in the Faculty in order to increase supervision experience.

## Cross-disciplinary Research Support

There are a number of cross-disciplinary programmes in the Laws Faculty:

The Laws Faculty provides both **joint PhD scholarships** and **joint supervision arrangements** with a number of Faculties and Departments including Engineering, Crime Sciences, Cognitive and Decision Sciences, Medicine, Film Studies and Geography.

The Faculty encourages and financially supports our PhD cohort to organise an annual **PhD and Early Career Conference**. This Conference is deliberately inter/cross-disciplinary in approach, and fosters cross-disciplinary contacts not just within UCL but with researchers in other institutions.

The Faculty has established the **PRIF fund**, with £20,000 available annually for all 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> year and CRS students to apply for financial support for research activities that foster cross-disciplinary research as well as high impact research with external groups such as NGOs, legal practice, government and the judiciary.

## New Laws Faculty PhD Skills Programme

In 2015-16 the Faculty introduced a new PhD Skills Programme. Key features of the programme include:

- Greater development of professional skills (writing, presentations, teaching, engagement)
- First Year PhD Student Annual Presentation of Research to Faculty in June prior to upgrade
- Integration of more Faculty academic staff into the PhD Skills Programme
- Research Integrity Training with a Research Ethics Team of highly experienced faculty members who can advise and guide all PhD students on the ethical aspects of their research

## Support & Monitoring of PhD Students through Upgrade and Completion

**Upgrade:** We have introduced a First Year PhD Student requirement of 3-month and 6-month presentations of their research and a full-day Faculty-wide "Research Workshop" in Term 3 in which all First Year students can present material from their upgrade work for helpful and supportive feedback.

**Submission and Completion:** The Director of Research Studies (supported by the Deputy DRS) holds annual meetings with all 2<sup>nd</sup> Year, 3<sup>rd</sup> Year and CRS students. This enables the Faculty to provide an additional level of support and monitoring to those approaching the final submission stage.