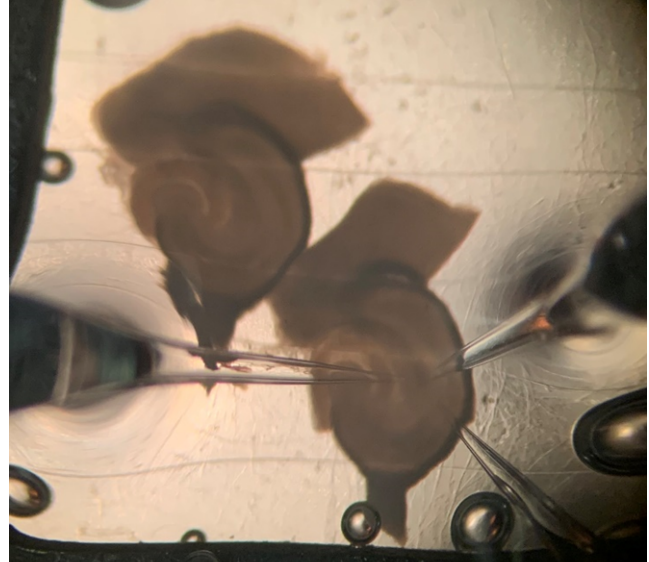


Cell and Developmental Biology (CDB)

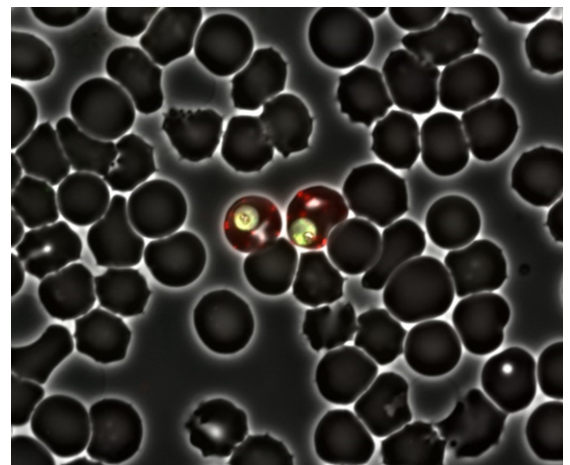
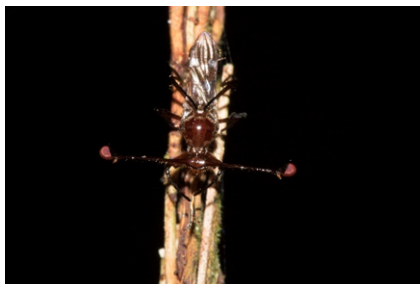


Neuroscience, Physiology and Pharmacology (NPP)

MPhil/PhD Student Handbook 2024-2025 (for Staff and Students)



Genetics, Evolution and Environment (GEE)



Structural and Molecular Biology (SMB)

Cover images

- Top left: Picture of neural crest labelled in zebrafish imaged on a light sheet microscope. Zimeng Wu, PhD student, CDB.
Two pictures of confocal *in vivo* imaging of *Drosophila pupal* adipocyte expressing a nuclear marker in magenta and a Clasp-GFP microtubule marker in green, one single cell and the other consisting of a wider field of view with more cells. *Drosophila* adipocytes have a non-centrosomal microtubule-organizing centre around the nucleus and dynamic microtubules at the cell periphery depicted as bright dots, scale bar 10µm. Ioanna Pitsidianaki, PhD student, Franz lab, CDB.
- Top right: Acute mouse hippocampal brain slices, seen under the microscope, prepared for extracellular fields recordings to study synaptic plasticity. Three microelectrodes can be seen attached to distinct layers within the hippocampus on the right, are used to stimulate and record the electrical activity. Abdulaziz Aljawder, PhD student, Professor Frances Edwards's laboratory, NPP.
- Bottom left: Genome synteny maps of different species. Omar Matar, PhD student GEE.
Pictures of *Teleopsis dalmanni* (stalk-eyed flies), one male and one female. Kiran Lee, PhD student GEE.
- Bottom right: Fluorescence microscopy image of two malaria parasites. Parasites invade and reside inside red blood cells, also known as erythrocytes. To survive, parasites remodel their host cells both structurally and functionally by exporting proteins into the erythrocyte. This image depicts two malaria parasite infected human red blood cells surrounded by uninfected erythrocytes. The parasites express an endoplasmic reticulum resident protein tagged with a green fluorescent protein, illuminating the parasite. The parasites also express an erythrocyte resident protein fused to a red fluorescent tag, giving their host cells a translucent, gemstone-like appearance. Parasite proteins exported into the red blood cell play a key role in the pathogenicity of the disease. Yvette Levray-Szabados, PhD student, SMB.

Division of Biosciences Information for PGR Students

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1. Key Members of Staff

Faculty Graduate Tutor: Professor Jasmina Jovanovic

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Division of Biosciences Associate Director with responsibilities for PGR programmes: Professor Robert Insall

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Division of Biosciences Postgraduate Research (PGR) Admin Team

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Research Department of Cell and Developmental Biology

Head of Department

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Professor Claudio Stern
(Developmental and Stem Cell Biology programme)
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Research Department of Genetics, Evolution and Environment

Head of Department

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Research Department of Neuroscience, Physiology and Pharmacology

Head of Department

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Sophia Jex-Blake Professor of Physiology
Pro-Vice-Provost (Research Technology Platforms)
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Research Department of Structural and Molecular Biology

Head of Department

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Professor Ivan Gout (Admissions Tutor)
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London Interdisciplinary Doctoral Programme (BBSRC DTP/LIDO)

Director

Professor Angus Silver
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e-mail: a.silver@ucl.ac.uk

Doctoral Training and CPD Manager

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Room B52/3 Basement, Medical School Building
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UCL-Birkbeck Medical Research Council Doctoral Training Partnership

Director

Professor Geraint Rees
Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement)
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e-mail: g.rees@ucl.ac.uk

Co-Director	Professor Paola Pedarzani Division of Biosciences Tel: 020 7679 7744 e-mail: p.pedarzani@ucl.ac.uk
Doctoral Training and CPD Manager	Mrs Nadine Wheadon Room B52/3, Basement, Medical School Building Tel: 020 3549 5458 e-mail: n.wheadon@ucl.ac.uk
Deputy Doctoral Training and CPD Manager	Ms Kim Duffy Room B52/3 Basement, Medical School Building Tel: 020 3108 9917 e-mail: k.duffy@ucl.ac.uk

Crick Programme

For all students registered at UCL (in whichever Faculty they might be working)

Point of contact and academic lead at UCL	Professor Jasmina Jovanovic School of Pharmacy, Brunswick Square Tel: 020 7753 5887 e-mail: j.jovanovic@ucl.ac.uk
Administrative contacts	Miss Jane Inge Medical School Building, Room 241 Tel: 020 7679 0879 (x40879) e-mail: j.inge@ucl.ac.uk Mrs Debbie Bartram Room B52/3 Basement, Medical School Building Tel: 020 3549 5462 (x65462) e-mail: biosciences.pgr.admin@ucl.ac.uk

2. Welcome!

Welcome to the start of your PhD in the Division of Biosciences, part of the Faculty of Life Sciences.

The Division has four Research Departments:

[Cell and Developmental Biology](#) (CDB)

[Genetics, Evolution and Environment](#) (GEE)

[Neuroscience, Physiology and Pharmacology](#) (NPP)

[Structural and Molecular Biology](#) (SMB)

Starting a Postgraduate Research (PGR) Degree can be both an exciting and challenging experience.

We are here to guide you through your journey as a UCL Postgraduate Research Student and make your transition to life at UCL as smooth as possible.

If you encounter any problems or need assistance, in the first instance please speak to your Primary Supervisor.

This booklet provides critical information you will need to successfully navigate your MPhil/PhD programme in the Division of Biosciences and **MUST BE READ AND KEPT FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**. Please also see the [Academic Regulations and Guidelines for Research Degree Students](#).

3. Work, Attendance and Illness

As with normal working practices, you are expected to be in attendance for at least 37 hours per week, and in general all students occasionally find they need to work far longer hours. UCL has [Christmas and Easter closure periods](#) and if you wish to work during those periods you will need to make special arrangements with both your Supervisor and the Divisional Operations team.

UCL has a duty to keep the attendance, conduct and progress of students under continuous review. As with members of staff, annual leave is 27 days per year, to be taken following agreement with your Principal Supervisor. A maximum of 5 days can be carried over from one year to the next.

If you are ill, you should contact your Principal Supervisor immediately and keep them informed of progress for longer term illness. A medical certificate is required in cases of illness lasting more than one week. More information is on the [interruptions website](#).

Portico – Your UCL Student Record

Access [Portico](#) using your UCL userid and password. If you have forgotten your password or need any further information about access please contact the [ISD Helpdesk](#).

It is your responsibility to keep your Portico record up-to-date. Please ensure that you enter any change of address or telephone number so that your Supervisor, Graduate Tutor or the [PGR Admin Team](#) can contact you in an emergency.

Continuing registration is also via Portico including payment of fees as appropriate. You must re-enrol at the start of each academic session – you will be prompted to do this via e-mails from the Student Centre.

You can download a statement of student status, bank letter or statement of award from your Portico account.

4. Keeping in Touch

Information from the [PGR Admin Team](#), Graduate Tutors, etc, is sent to **UCL** e-mail addresses. Please make sure you check this regularly.

UCL Communications

[myUCL](#): weekly term-time e-newsletter to all students which covers key internal announcements, events and opportunities

[UCL Instagram](#): UCL's official Instagram channel, featuring news, events, competitions and images from across the UCL community

[@ucl Twitter channel](#): sharing highlights of life at UCL from across UCL's diverse community

5. Research Ethics and Integrity

It is your responsibility to make sure that you have ethical permission in place before performing research where this is required. Please refer to the [Research Ethics](#) website for more information.

Research Integrity

Being a researcher involves a high level of ethical standards and integrity in one's work and interactions with others. UCL takes integrity very seriously and misconduct in research can be very damaging for individuals and the institution as a whole. [More information on research integrity and training courses](#).

Academic Integrity

[Academic Integrity](#) means being honest in your academic work and making sure that you formally recognise and reference the existing knowledge and ideas on which your work is based. If you do not acknowledge the work or ideas of others, you could be penalised for Academic Misconduct. The importance of Academic Integrity and resources to help you develop good practice are outlined on the website.

Data Ownership and Laboratory notebooks and recording of research data

Laboratory notebooks need to contain clear evidence of the research carried out and, most importantly, must include the dates on which the results were achieved. Here are some guidelines and advice:

- Laboratory notebooks containing the research data obtained whilst working at UCL are the property of the Division of Biosciences, UCL, as well as the investigators. All laboratory notebooks generated by the students are to be retained by the Division of Biosciences. A student is, however, permitted to make and retain photocopies of the notebooks.
- Laboratory notebooks should be hardbound, with photomicrographs and images of gels or other raw data generated, permanently attached to the pages of the notebooks.
- If you hold your data electronically then this should be authenticated by the supervisor and a copy provided to be retained by the Division of Biosciences.

Please complete the Data Ownership form on the [Moodle induction](#).

6. Supervision and Monitoring

You should already know your Principal Supervisor. You should also have a Second Supervisor, to be selected within two weeks of the start of your PhD, and with the agreement of your Principal Supervisor. All students will be appointed a Departmental Graduate Tutor – they exercise general academic and pastoral oversight of PGR students in the Department, including your induction, supervision, progression and examination.

We have a **MANDATORY** online induction in Moodle which must be completed every year by all students: [Moodle Induction](#)

Research Student Log

Each student's progress is recorded using the **mandatory** [Research Student Log](#) which is managed by the [UCL Doctoral School](#). Access to this, as well as e-mail and other electronic information at UCL, is via your UCL userid and password.

You need to log on to activate your Log. The details of your Principal and, when known, Second Supervisor will automatically be populated by your Portico record. If they are not showing, please contact the [PGR Admin Team](#).

Your milestones, reports and objectives are guided by the Log, your Supervisors and Graduate Tutor. Failure to meet the target dates for the Log will automatically generate reminders to you. Your Principal and Second Supervisors will receive notification of all the entries you submit to the Log and be asked to approve them.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your Log is kept up-to-date and that progress points (milestones) are completed and signed off by your Supervisors. Upgrade to PhD and exam entry/appointment of examiners is conditional on appropriate completion.

Progress of all students is monitored by a Thesis Committee, consisting of your Principal Supervisor, Second Supervisor and a Thesis Chair.

You will meet with the Thesis Committee four times in your first year then at least once in each of the subsequent years. Before each meeting you will normally be expected to submit a written report to the Committee and give a brief presentation at the meeting. The meetings should be recorded in the online [Research Student Log](#) and last approx. thirty minutes; the upgrade meeting should last a minimum of one hour.

For full details of the requirements of these meetings please see section four of the Moodle induction – [PGR Research Log guidelines](#).

Transfer from MPhil to PhD Registration

We have a formalized system of progress assessment in order to decide whether you should be upgraded to continue with study for a PhD or be advised to withdraw.

The transfer should be completed at these time points after initial registration:

- full-time students - approx. 12 months (not less than 9 months and not later than 18 months)
- part-time students - approx. 24 months (not less than 15 months and not later than 30 months)

It is important that the transfer is carried out sufficiently early in the project as it gives an opportunity to assess progress and make appropriate adjustments to the direction of the project if necessary.

For further information please see the guidelines for Upgrade on Moodle for your Department [PGR Research Log guidelines](#).

Preparation and Submission of Thesis

You are strongly encouraged to complete laboratory work, write up and submit within the 3 year¹ (5 year part-time) research period of your PhD programme.

UCL recognises that this is not always possible and offers a 1 year (2 years for part-time students) CRS status¹ which is non-fee paying. During CRS you are not expected to be receiving supervision and use of CRS status should be a fall-back position as without a stipend this can be very difficult to manage. Please note that on some funded programmes you are expected to submit within the funding period and therefore not entitled to CRS. Students who come to the end of their authorised period of CRS status but have not submitted a thesis will no longer be registered as students nor have access to UCL facilities.

Your submission date is the end of registration date in Portico. This date may include a CRS period. Please contact the [PGR Admin Team](#) if you have any queries with this date.

Four months before you plan to submit:

- You and your supervisor need to complete an [Examiner Nomination form](#)
- You need to complete an [Exam Entry form](#) in Portico
- You need to complete an [Impact Statement](#)

7. Skills Development

You are required to complete two weeks of skills training in each year of your programme.

In addition to formal courses, other important areas of skills training that need to be logged include participation in laboratory meetings, attendance at conferences, preparation and presentation of posters and talks at conferences, demonstrating, attendance at Departmental seminar series and retreats.

Appropriate courses **must** be agreed with your Principal Supervisor before signing up for them. Doctoral School courses are free to students and a full listing of the courses available can be found in the [Doctoral Skills Development Programme](#).

¹ Students with a rotation period may have a few months more than 3 years to complete their PhD. Students with a rotation period may not be entitled to a CRS year. If you are on a programme with a rotation period see Appendix I.

Attendance at Taught Courses

If you feel that there is any area of your knowledge that may be refreshed or supported by attendance at one of the [undergraduate or postgraduate taught modules](#), please obtain your Supervisor's agreement then contact the relevant module tutor to agree attendance.

Career Development

The Graduate Skills programme includes a number of Career Development courses. Please take advantage of relevant courses, particularly as you reach the period when you will be looking to progress your career. Career advice can be found on the [UCL Careers website](#).

Teaching Opportunities

We present an exciting opportunity for PhD students in their second year and beyond to become a **Postgraduate Teaching Assistant (PGTA)** within the Division of Biosciences to assist with the running of our undergraduate teaching. This role will not only count towards your skills development, but will be a valuable addition to your CV.

The posts are suitable for students with degrees in biosciences-related subjects and a good knowledge of the subject matter of each particular module. Previous experience with teaching (particularly running undergraduate practicals/tutorials) is an advantage, however any other relevant training will be provided by the Division.

As a PGTA, you will also gain access to a suite of developmental opportunities known as UCL Arena. Provision for PGTAs is delivered through [UCL Arena One](#) and includes a mandatory introductory three hour Gateway workshop for all students who are assigned teaching for the first time. Please follow the Arena One link for further information and to register for training if interested.

Successful PGTAs will receive an Averaged Hours contract from the Biosciences Staffing Team and are appointed at point 21 of grade 6 of UCL salary scales. Payment is for contact hours plus hours for preparation/training as directed by the module organiser. Payment is made three times each term, with additional payments made for any extra hours accrued.

Visit the [Biosciences PGTA Moodle page](#) for details of available roles and how to submit your CV!

Feel free to reach out to us at biosciencesPGTA@ucl.ac.uk if you have any questions.

Supervising Masters Students

You may be asked to supervise Masters students, which is good for your CV but you can decline.

Volunteering Service

[Volunteering](#) is a great way to get involved in local projects and apply your diverse skills for the benefit of the community. You'll get lots of support and advice from the Volunteering Service.

8. Events

Seminars

The Division of Biosciences runs a regular [series of seminars](#) during term time. Your name will be added to the seminar mailing list so that you receive e-mail reminders. If you are not receiving this information, please contact the [PGR Admin Team](#). You are expected to attend those seminars that are relevant to your research.

Scientific Society Meetings

You are encouraged to take advantage of subject-specific national or international society meetings every year to show-case your work and to meet and discuss your work with your peers working in related areas. Graduate Student Societies may arrange specific symposia associated with their subject area. These meetings provide a valuable way to make contacts for future career opportunities.

Departmental Retreats and Symposia

CDB Retreat: Held every two-three years and all costs for the retreat are covered by the Department.

ISMB Retreat: The ISMB Retreat takes place biennially over two days in June/July with an overnight stay. The last three Retreats have taken place at Robinson College, Cambridge. The free event is attended by a limited number of people from within the joint Institute of Structural and Molecular Biology. The aim of each Retreat is to explore links within biology, to build connections between ISMB members and to encourage collaboration. The strongest voice is given to students and postdocs, with a number presenting talks and all given the opportunity to present posters in the evening session. Each Retreat also features three keynote talks by visiting speakers and a lively activity that involves all attendees.

CDB Annual Graduate Symposium: A one or two day event held every year with PGR students giving either a presentation or a poster – depending on their year of study. Prizes are awarded for the best posters/presentations.

SMB Annual Graduate Symposium: A two day event held every year with PGR students giving either a presentation or a poster – depending on their year of study. Prizes are awarded for the best posters/presentations.

GEE Annual Graduate Symposium: A two day event held every year with PGR students giving either a presentation or a poster – depending on their year of study. Prizes are awarded for the best posters/presentations.

London Interdisciplinary Doctoral Programme Events: A three day academic retreat held each September. The programme is planned by the students and the cost is met by the LIDo programme. The students also have a two day end of rotation presentation event in February and June.

UCL Birkbeck Medical Research Council: A two day academic retreat held each September. The programme is planned by the students and the cost is met by the UCL Birkbeck MRC DTP programme. The students also have one day end of rotation presentation events in January, April and July.

Divisional Events: The student reps on the Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) organise four events a year.

9. Student Facilities

Student Hubs

The Biosciences PGR Student Hub is located in the Medical Sciences Building, rooms LG40/41, accessed via the passageway between the Medical Sciences and Andrew Huxley Buildings, entrance with 'Pharmacology' carved in stone above the doorway. There is a kitchen area, social area and a bank of computers.

The UCL Graduate Student Hub is located in the South Wing basement behind the Print Room Café. It is open 24-7 and comprises a seminar room for group discussion and presentations, a breakout space with integrated kitchenette, a common room and a suite of individual study carrels.

The Senate House Hub, located on the third floor, South Block, Senate House, is a dedicated space for PGR students. It provides a variety of study spaces for individual and group/project working.

Students' Union UCL

As the student representative body, the [Union](#) is run by students for students. It is independent of UCL and a registered charity, providing a range of services to support students and help them develop skills and interests while at UCL. Students automatically become a member during enrolment (but can opt out).

Ridgmount Practice (UCL Health Centre)

A National Health Service (NHS) practice providing healthcare for students living within its catchment area (i.e. near the main UCL campus). Students can also choose to register with a practice closer to where they live if they prefer. Find out more about the [Ridgmount Practice](#).

Libraries

[Information and assistance for using the library](#) and details of services offered.

The UCL biology and medical sciences collections are in the Science Library (DMS Watson Building, Malet Place). Another useful Library is in the Cruciform Building, across Gower Street.

Biosciences Parent and Baby Room

There is a Divisional Breastfeeding/Parent/Baby Room in the Darwin Building, Room 401D, with a fridge and a comfy chair. The room is available to PhD students and staff in the Division who are new parents and need to use it for feeding/expressing/quiet time when visiting on 'keeping in touch' days, etc. Please ask the the [PGR Admin Team](#) for the access code.

10. Health and Safety

The [Division of Biosciences Health and Safety site](#) has all the essential information relating to Health and Safety at UCL and the Division of Biosciences in particular. When you first go to this site, please request access and the Operations Team will approve.

It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with this information and it is mandatory that you attend a UCL Safety Induction.

11. Wellness and Support Services

Your first port of call if you have a problem is your Principal Supervisor.

Websites for UCL Support Services

[Student Enquiries Centre](#): based on the first floor of the Student Centre building in Gordon Square, provides information and support related to your registration and student record

[askUCL](#): student enquiry system to search for answers and raise enquiries

[Student Support and Wellbeing](#): offers a wide range of support services

[Student Mediator](#): helps troubleshoot problems that are unable to be resolved through informal means

[Disability and Mental Health and Wellbeing Support](#) provide information and advice on issues around disability, mental health and wellbeing

[International Student Support Team](#): helps international students settle into life in the UK and make the most of their time at UCL and in London, this includes practical guidance on healthcare, banking, transport and safety

[Student Psychological and Counselling Services](#): dedicated to helping students with personal, emotional and psychological concerns

[Student Financial Support](#)

[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#)

[Religion and Faith](#)

[LGBTQ+ Students](#)

[Students' Union UCL Advice Service](#): advice on academic issues, housing, employment, money and debt and many other personal and university matters

There is also:

[The Samaritans](#): to talk to someone at any time, day or night, call: 116 123

[Nightline](#): a confidential listening, support and practical information service available overnight and run by student volunteers, tel: 0207 631 0101

Student Partnership Committee (formerly Staff-Student Consultative Committee)

This Committee meets once per term to discuss management of studies to improve and enhance academic and social life in the Division and any issues arising. It provides an opportunity for Graduate Tutors/Supervisors to discuss prospective changes with PGR student representatives and for the students to propose changes to be considered by the staff. PGR students from each Department in the Division elect a student to represent them. In addition, the Division elects a student to be the lead representative who will be responsible for co-chairing and agenda setting for the meetings alongside a staff member.

Please see the [Moodle site contacts](#) for a list of the current student reps.

Biosciences PhD Student Mentor Scheme

This is a great opportunity to help fellow PhD students in the department and improve the PhD student experience of everyone by providing extra discussion points outside of supervisory teams. No matter how far through your PhD you are, we're happy to have you join as a mentor, a mentee, or both!

Whether it's crafting your research topic or publishing a paper, navigating UCL or the London housing market, finding an internship or writing up your thesis, this is a chance to share your hard-earned knowledge with your peers.

Mentors and mentees will be organised into small groups which will meet every few weeks to discuss their PhD student experience. Each group is expected to have ~2-3 mentors per group, meaning mentees get multiple sources of advice, and mentors can also benefit from discussing solutions with their peers. This means you will also build a useful network beyond your research group - you never know who has that one piece of equipment you'll need in 6 months.

Sunflower Lanyard Scheme

The Sunflower Lanyard scheme helps to discretely indicate that someone has an invisible disability and may require additional assistance when out in public. Any new or existing staff or students with an invisible disability can wear their own Sunflower Lanyard or collect one at the locations listed at this link: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/estates/bloomsbury-campus/accessible-campus/sunflower-lanyard-invisible-disability-scheme>

Student Welfare, Grievances and Difficulties

If you have any concerns about your supervision, progression, etc, please discuss these with your Graduate Tutor at the earliest possible opportunity.

If you feel that a member of staff has unfairly treated you in any way, please raise it first with that member of staff. If that is inappropriate, then see your Graduate Tutor who can also advise on any difficulties (personal, financial, medical or academic) affecting your studies.

Inclusion Leads - members of staff who act as a source of advice and informal support to staff and PhD students. Students and staff are welcome to contact them, in confidence, with any problems or concerns they may have. They are all trained Mental Health First Aiders.

The Inclusion Leads for the Division are:

- **Atalanta Hersey**, Teaching Office, Room G11A, Medawar Building (a.hersey@ucl.ac.uk)
- **Rebecca Khan**, Finance Office, Room 128, Medical Sciences Building (rebecca.khan@ucl.ac.uk)
- **Stavroula Lialiou**, Finance Office, Room 128, Medical Sciences Building (s.lialiou@ucl.ac.uk)
- **Tabitha Owen**, Room 111, Darwin Building (tabitha.owen@ucl.ac.uk)
- **Adolfo Quinones Lombrana**, Darwin Research Facility (a.quinones@ucl.ac.uk)

The Life Sciences Faculty Welfare Advisers are: Sukh Thiara and Henny Green FLS.Studentwellbeing@ucl.ac.uk

12. Appendix 1

Additional Notes for PGR students who have had a year of rotations

PhD in Developmental and Stem Cell Biology: students will be monitored by their rotation supervisors in the first year together with the Steering Committee: Professor Claudio Stern, Professor Roberto Mayor. From the second year, when they move into their chosen lab to commence their PhD with a Principal Supervisor, they will be monitored by their Thesis Committee. They may be entitled to a CRS year.

BBSRC DTP - London Interdisciplinary Doctoral Programme (LIDo): students will be monitored by their rotation supervisors in the first year together with the Management Committee. From the second year, when they move into their chosen lab to commence their PhD with a Principal Supervisor, they will be monitored by their Thesis Committee, consisting of Second Supervisor (one of the supervisors on the Programme) and Graduate Tutor (a member of the Committee). For those students who select a PhD project in a partner institution other than UCL, their registration will be transferred to the host institution at the start of year two of the PhD programme. BBSRC DTP students are not entitled to a CRS year. As defined by the Research Council, submission is expected to be within 4 years of start date. The 4 year duration of this programme includes the writing up period. Given the strict time limits for completion, the rotation projects should be linked to the eventual PhD project, although this is not compulsory.

MRC DTP - UCL Birkbeck Medical Research Council: students will be monitored by their rotation supervisors in the first year together with the Management Committee. From the second year, when they move into their chosen lab to commence their PhD with a Principal Supervisor, they will be monitored by their Thesis Committee, consisting of Second Supervisor (one of the supervisors on the Programme) and Graduate Tutor (a member of the Committee). For those students who select a PhD project in a partner institution other than UCL, their registration will be transferred to the host institution at the start of year two of the PhD programme. MRC DTP students are not entitled to a CRS year.