



UCL Academic Manual 2021-22

Chapter 5: Research Degrees Framework

Guidelines for Supervising Visiting Research Students

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Guidance

Introduction

Students currently enrolled on a PhD overseas can apply to come to UCL as a *Visiting Research Student* to conduct Research here towards their PhD overseas. Research students can apply to spend between 3 to 12 months at UCL undertaking research which is complementary to the Doctoral/PhD project they are undertaking at the university in which they are enrolled.

It is possible to come to UCL as a *Visiting Research Student* either via an [established exchange agreement](#) or independently. If there is no exchange agreement in place to the relevant department, students may still be able to apply to UCL as an independent visiting research student. Tuition fees are payable on a pro-rata basis.

All students coming to UCL as Visiting Research Students must apply to UCL through the Admissions Section of Student and Registry Services in the normal way and be enrolled at UCL before they commence their research here.

Full information is available on the [Prospective Students Webpages](#).

As Visiting Research Students are registered at UCL for the period they are here, they are subject to UCL Regulations and the Code of Practice for Graduate Research Degrees during their time with us (except where noted below).

Each Visiting Research Student will work under the guidance of a suitably qualified and approved UCL research Supervisor during their time at UCL (see regulations for supervisor eligibility criteria) and the Supervisor must be recorded against their Portico record in the normal

way. Students are not required to have both a Principal and Subsidiary Supervisor as is the case for UCL registered students; they typically have one Supervisor allocated to oversee their work. It is however good practice for students to be introduced to colleagues within the department and the wider UCL community who might enrich their research further.

Visiting Research Students benefit from undertaking research in two environments, providing different insights and perspectives within and between disciplines and helping to foster increased creativity in their research. Students also gain access to an increased range of resources, equipment, techniques and research sources/collections.

The benefits to the host Supervisor, department and to UCL are also tangible, and the experience of supervising researchers currently working in a different educational environment can be rewarding and help to encourage further collaboration between individuals and institutions.

Supervising a Visiting Research Student is a different matter however to supervising UCL enrolled research students, and the following guidance seeks to provide Supervisors and departments with assistance in managing the students whilst they are here and how best to ensure they make the most of the relatively short period of the visit.

Approaches to Supervising

Before they arrive

Before the student arrives, it is important to agree with them, in consultation with their Supervisor at the home institution, a plan for the research that can be undertaken successfully within their time at UCL. This might be a discrete project that can be completed in the timeframe or one element of their on-going research project. In all cases the work they propose to do at UCL should have direct relevance to their overarching research project.

It is also important to discuss the resources that will be needed during their time here: what can be made available to them and if research or consumable costs are involved how this will be funded (it is reasonable for example to expect Visiting Research Students' home institution to be providing funding for research costs and conference attendance etc.).

As Visiting Research Students are at UCL for a relatively short period it is good practice to consider in advance the processes and procedures that will need to be completed as quickly as possible on arrival (for example, ethics approval, safety training see below).

On Arrival - first steps

It is important that Supervisors help to foster a productive relationship as early and as quickly as possible after they arrive. An initial supervisory meeting should be held with the students soon after their arrival to discuss how the plan for the research will be implemented and reviewed during their time at UCL.

It is also important that Visiting Research Students are made familiar with the research facilities and activities at UCL and of their responsibility to avoid any form of research misconduct whilst they are here. Supervisors must ensure that due consideration has been given to the ethical dimensions of the research to be undertaken at UCL and that ethics approval is sought for the appropriate UCL Research Ethics Committee. Where approval for the research has already been obtained from the student's home institution then a copy of the application and formal

approval must be submitted for consideration under the standard UCL ethics procedures (see “Ethics” on [UCL’s Research Integrity pages](#)).

A risk assessment of laboratory and/or field-based activities must also be carried out in accordance with UCL and departmental procedures and students must receive the required safety training as appropriate.

Supervisors should determine, in consultation with the Head of Department, at the start of a student’s project at UCL, whether an assignment of Intellectual Property Rights/Copyright is necessary and if so, ensure that an agreement on IPR/Copyright has been established at the outset of the project.

The Visiting Research Student may well be new to the UK and certainly new to UCL and the department. They should be introduced to the department, its facilities and procedures, and to other students and relevant staff and encouraged to take as full part as possible in the social and intellectual life of the department and UCL.

Managing the Research and the Boundaries of Supervisory Responsibility

The boundaries of Supervisors’ responsibilities and the amount of time they will spend advising Visiting Research Students will vary according to the discipline and the needs of the research project and of the individual researcher. In general however, Supervisors will have a shorter period in which to build up a productive working relationship. It is therefore particularly important to establish early on a strict timetable of regular meetings with the student; as with UCL students, such meetings should take place at least once per month although more regular meetings may well be appropriate particularly if the student is only at UCL for three months. Visiting Research Student should not be taken on unless the Supervisor is able to devote reasonable time to the student.

As with UCL research students, Supervisors should provide prompt constructive criticism and reaction on submitted draft work and discuss with the student the work accomplished and revise the objectives as the work proceeds.

Visiting Research Students are not required to use UCL’s Research Student Log during their time here, although they may. They should be encouraged to plan and document their research thoroughly and to keep records in a state which can be investigated and understood by anyone with a legitimate right to enquire.

End of Registration and Beyond

Hosting a Visiting Research Student provides opportunities not only for the students, but also for the Supervisor. The visit can create opportunities for on-going collaboration with the student and the home institution and staff are encouraged to make the most of the opportunities presented.

As with all student/Supervisor relationships the interaction is unlikely to end once the student returns to their home institution and Supervisors may be called upon to provide references etc. in the future. Ongoing interaction with the student is at the discretion of the Supervisor.