



**GOS ICH**  
**STAFF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**  
Meeting to be held on

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 12.00noon**  
**in Lower Ground Floor Seminar Room (30 Guilford Street)**

**Minutes**

**Present:** 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)  
Professor Mary Fewtrell, Postgraduate Research Tutor,  
Population, Policy and Practice (PPP)  
Dr Mona Bajaj-Elliott, Postgraduate Research Tutor,  
Infection, Immunity, Inflammation (III)  
Patricia Hunter, RTDR, Infection, Immunity, Inflammation (III)  
Kathryn Hesketh, RTDR, Population, Policy and Practice (PPP)  
Sophie Bennett, RTDR, Population, Policy and Practice (PPP)  
Jeshmi Jeyabalan Srikanan, RTDR, Genetics and Genomic Medicine (GGM)  
Grazia Manzotti, Equal Opportunity Liaison Officer (DEOLO)  
Philippa Mills, Chair of the GOSICH Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion  
(EDI) Committee

**Student Representation:**

Diana Rosenthal, Lead Research Student Representative (RSR) – PPP, Year 2  
– Co-Chair of SSCC, EDI Student Focus Group  
Nicole Filipow, RSR, III, Year 1  
Elisabeth Robinson, RSR, III - Year 3  
Remi Looi-Somoye, RSR, DBC, Year 2  
Ashwak Alshehri, RSR, DBC, Year 3  
Claudiu Cozmescu, RSR GGM, Year 1  
Ivan Doykov, RSR, GGM, Year 2, EDI Student Focus Group  
Chloe Li, RSR, DN, Year 1/2  
Clarissa Sorger, RSR, DN, Year 1/2  
Melanie Koelbel, RSR, DN, Year 1/3  
Lucy Karwatowska, RSR, PPP, Year 1  
Emeline Rougeaux RSR, PPP, Year 2  
Miki (Kulnipa) Kittisakmontri, RSR, PPP, Year 3  
Jeanne Wolstencroft, RSR, PPP, Year 3

## Apologies:

Prof Hannah Mitchison, Postgraduate Tutor, GGM  
Jane Simmonds, Student Careers Lead  
Natasha Schoeler, RTDR, DN  
Dr Jessica Pickles, RTDR, DBC  
Paloma Garcia-Paredes, Education Administration Manager  
Raasib Mahmood, RSR, DBC, Year 1  
Kerry-Anne Kite, RSR, III, Year 2  
Tiago Mendes Martins, RSR, GGM, Year 3

1	<p><b>Welcome and introductions</b></p> <p>DR introduced herself as Lead RSR and welcomed the committee. CT welcomed all the new Reps and thanked them for stepping up to become RSRs.</p> <p>SSCC members in attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o PGR team</li><li>o RSRs including PG Society representation</li></ul> <p>- In attendance for Term 1 SSCC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Research &amp; Training Department Representatives</li><li>o Grazia Manzotti - Departmental Equal Opportunity Liaison Officer</li><li>o Philippa Mills – Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) Initiative, Chair</li><li>o Ivan Doykov (EDI, plus RSR)</li></ul> <p>SSCC - what we do and Terms of Reference</p> <p>DR and CT summarised the purpose of SSCC meetings and noted the Terms of Reference are available on the intranet.</p>
2	<p><b>Minutes of the previous meeting 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019</b></p> <p>Minutes agreed and approved.</p>
3	<p><b>Matters Arising from the minutes</b></p> <p>To be addressed via the Agenda</p>
4	<p><b>Student Mentor Meetings – Oral report by mentors</b></p> <p><u>Developmental Biology &amp; Cancer (DBC)</u> - Meeting not yet taken place <u>Genetics and Genomic Medicine (GGM)</u> - Meeting not yet taken place</p> <p><u>Infection, Immunity, Inflammation (III)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i) Lack of support and financial assistance for statistics</li><li>ii) Software availability – are there any grant schemes available?</li><li>iii) Requested student discount for canteen food - currently £5.25 per meal</li></ul> <p><u>Population, Policy and Practice (PPP)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i) New student induction too long</li><li>ii) Difficulties finding key information caused by broken links on UCL website and confusion navigating between Moodle and the intranet sites</li><li>iii) Lack of software licence availability</li></ul>

iv) Confusion over research log

Developmental Neurosciences (DN)

- i) Students are happy with the range of Doctoral courses offered
- ii) Research log and annual monitoring reports feel like duplicated work and difficulties experienced when not all supervisors engage with these processes
- iii) Lack of supervisor support on projects
- iv) Lack of formal arrangements for Post Docs involvement with PhD students
- v) Requested monthly or more regular stipend payments

Annual monitoring and research log requirements

RSRs reported that there are difficulties experienced with completing the research log in some cases where supervisors do not always engage with the process and the annual monitoring reports can feel like duplicated work with similar difficulties. RSRs enquired whether these processes could align better to reduce duplication. CT reiterated that the two processes do not require much, if any, overlap as they differ in their purpose; the focus on the research log entries is during the early stages of Year 1, whereas annual monitoring only comes into play 12 months post-registration. CT reiterated that the research log would remain a mandatory process as this system complies with the UCL regulations on monitoring student progress. Additionally it is a tool used by the DGT for carrying out checks prior to upgrades and exam entry and proves useful for monitoring skills points. CT clarified the purpose of annual monitoring as an independent process that provides a safety net for students to raise issues confidentially with a member of the postgraduate team, and which has more of a focus on pastoral issues. It was reiterated that participation is strongly encouraged as this process helps to pre-empt wider issues including where supervisors may not be engaging or where students are facing other challenges.

AS explained that the Thesis Committees which are being established for all new students in SLMS will provide an academic forum for students in conjunction with the research log. This should help distinguish the pastoral focus of the annual monitoring process. Although it is not currently the case, there is a possibility that Thesis Committees will evolve to form the same or similar reporting structure to the research log in future years. Additionally Thesis Committees will help to encourage more formalised training for students through the monitoring of Personal Development Plan (PDPs).

RSRs reported that it is hard to rate skills and knowledge on a scale within the research log and AS confirmed that there are proposed changes to align this more closely with points or remove it altogether. It was agreed by all that the functionality of the research log has room for improvement (i.e. reducing manual inputs) and AS explained that the RDC will shortly request student feedback for improving this to maximise benefit for the students.

**ACTION:** RSRs to feedback any ideas for improved research log functionality to CT.

Stipend payments

The issue of late and irregular stipend payments has been an ongoing issue escalated to Faculty level. The Head of Doctoral School will be following this up formally in writing to work towards resolving this issue across UCL (i.e. a move towards monthly payments). The new HR system could also help to facilitate changes for improvement.

Statistics/software licence availability

RSRs reported concerns over software availability where students have been informed there are no licences available and that licences must be bought with their grant. Niche software is very expensive (i.e. £100 per year for Graph Pad etc.) and free alternative software offered by IT is too complex and installation must be on a personal computer.

CT reported that concerns around statistics and software availability had been raised at a recent RDC meeting and the possibility of additional statistics support for PhD students has been discussed with Deborah Ridout. It was noted that BRC students have easier accessibility to support services through the Statistical Support Service. However, generally, unless a student (BRC-funded or otherwise) has funding available to pay for additional statistical support, the service will not be available to them. There was agreement that additional statistics support should be available to all PhD students as 'standard' regardless of whether or not they have funding available to pay for the service. It was reiterated that it is particularly difficult for students where supervisors do not have access to available funds to cover such costs. Although there is no solution at present, it is hoped that Thesis Committees may be able to help students via networking. One suggestion was that perhaps postdocs could act as contact points to provide help to PhD students, although CT explained this would require the task of matching individual students to Post Doc research expertise. Although the Data Science Initiative is in its infancy, this could also be a source of help in the future. Another suggestion was that PhD students could use the module catalogue, which is now available online, to identify the statistics courses available and contact the relevant module leads directly.

**ACTION:**

- ER to provide CT with student software requirements (which software and why).
- CT to discuss with Tansy regarding software issue and investigate whether it is possible to carry out the requests with IT or to consider an appropriate funding model.
- CT to consider how to manage institute-wide Post Doc support service for students.

Canteen prices

RSRs raised that other institutions offer student discount in the canteen and enquired whether it would be possible to introduce this at ICH, particularly following the recent price rise. It was stated that for some PhD students engaged in intensive / long experiments, it is difficult to leave the Institute to get lunch elsewhere.

**ACTION:** CT to discuss canteen prices for students with Tansy.

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**Recent developments for attention of research students**

**a) Submission rates and timings**

CT confirmed that the percentage of upgrades and submissions taking place within the expected timescale is being maintained at a high level and summarised the submission data from ICH (feedback from RDC). In 2014-15, 86% full time students submitted within 4 years of registration, and 33% part time students have submitted to date with the remainder still within 7 years of registration. In 2017-18, 88% full time students upgraded on time within 9-18 months. CT clarified that upgrades post-18 months require a supporting statement from the DGT. In 2014-15, 33% part-time students upgraded within 9-18 months and the remainder upgraded on time within 30 months post-registration. CT reiterated the importance of timely upgrade. DR noted that upgrade viva can sometimes be delayed for a variety of reasons outside of the student's control and enquired if there could be an emphasis to Faculty for additional support to help students through this process. CT explained that the introduction of Thesis Committees should help focus supervisors on identifying examiners and dates for student upgrades.

	<p><b>b) PGR support and wellbeing</b></p> <p>CT explained that the annual monitoring system is in place for students 12 months post-registration. In addition, Thesis Committees are currently in the early stages for new students, which will be discussed in more detail at later SSCC meetings.</p>
6	<p><b>Communication of PGR matters within academic programmes and across/beyond ICH</b></p> <p><u>Induction information and processes</u></p> <p>RSRs reported that some difficulties had been experienced by students as a result of miscommunication between teaching and admin staff within the department. It was agreed that the issues experienced were likely to be the result of recent staff changes causing a lack of continuity in roles and/or processes within the department. Fire safety awareness was also raised as a concern within the PPP department and DR requested whether this could be addressed. It was explained that the department admin staff often act as Fire Marshalls, but there are also other staff responsible for managing fire safety in their areas, e.g. Floor Managers and Department Managers, and these matters should be addressed with them directly. Additionally, these issues can be raised in department meetings attended by the Deputy Institute Manager, Sophie Elgood, and department admin teams. SF suggested that she could attend one of these meetings to have a Q&amp;A session with the admin staff regarding induction processes with the aim to help improve uniformity across programmes. It was noted, however, that SF can only give advice on PGR related matters. There was agreement that a designated admin rep for students within each department would be helpful to address department specific queries. RTDR's may additionally act as contact points to signpost students for basic queries. It was reiterated that academic queries should be raised with the relevant PG tutor.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RSRs to feedback requirements re. PGR related induction processes to SF by 9<sup>th</sup> December.</li> <li>• SF to attend department admin meeting for Q&amp;A session with Sophie Elgood and admin staff.</li> <li>• SF to create document that outlines induction roles for Research Degrees Office vs. Research &amp; Teaching Department admin team.</li> </ul> <p><u>Early careers – Jessica Pickles</u></p> <p>It was reported there is a small group of postdocs and PhD students from DBC have formed a committee (across ICH and ZCR), who are hoping to organise informal networking events including regular technical skills sessions and coffee mornings for early career researchers. The PhD networking event across programmes is also in the pipeline to be organised again. It was emphasised that this would need to be coordinated with the PG Student society.</p>
7	<p><b>Cohort Building</b></p> <p><b>a) Academic Events</b></p> <p>i) <u>3MT competition</u></p> <p>RSRs agreed that a student committee would coordinate the 3MT event this year across department / sections and they were reminded that department heats will need to take place well in advance of the ICH heat in April (dates tbc).</p>

	<p>ii) <u>ICH Annual Poster Competition / Open Day</u></p> <p>CT thanked all students and staff who participated and helped to organise the event. Special thanks were given to DR and ER for organising the first Student's Choice Award. Student feedback discussed in item 7.</p> <p><b>b) ICH Postgraduate Society report - Social events</b></p> <p>Each department has an allocated timeslot within the year to organise their own events as listed below. Departments can choose whether to hold one big event or a series of smaller ones with a budget of £140 per department.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population, Policy &amp; Practice: November/December</li> <li>• Infection, Immunity, Inflammation: February/March</li> <li>• Genetics &amp; Genomic Medicine: April/May</li> <li>• Developmental Neurosciences: June/July</li> <li>• Developmental Biology &amp; Cancer: August/September</li> </ul>
8	<p><b>Student Feedback on recent events</b></p> <p>i) <u>Autumn Induction</u></p> <p>RSRs reported that new students thought the autumn induction event was too long and it was raised that some elements, e.g. the lab safety induction talk, were not relevant to all students. Students also felt the event was repetitive to the Faculty and Doctoral School welcome events and noted that the Doctoral School and International induction events were not as helpful. RSRs suggested students should be signposted to the events which are the most useful to attend. CT reiterated that not all students attend each of the 3 events so duplication cannot be completely avoided and noted that duplication across the events is always reduced where possible. SF clarified that the Faculty request that the ICH Research Degrees office advertise the main four welcome events to new students, but it is not feasible for the team to assess which welcome events would be most helpful for individual students, although the importance of the ICH induction is always emphasised. AS noted that the information load provided at induction events is often overwhelming for new students and so it is important that key information is repeated. It was reminded that the LectureCast of the latest induction is on Moodle and the Doctoral School welcome event is also available online.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> CT to review the induction material to reduce duplication across induction events where possible.</p> <p>ii) <u>ICH Annual Poster Competition / Open Day</u></p> <p>RSRs suggested that more students could be encouraged to participate in the Students' Choice poster competition voting by ensuring more pens are available at the department information tables and instructions added to the voting cards to include the deadline time for voting.</p> <p>The MSc Cell and Gene Therapy and stats course ran late on the Open day, which meant that students on these courses missed the beginning of the event. CT and SF explained that it is not feasible to schedule the Open day around individual course timetables, Instead it was advised that Module Leads should work flexibly around the event, which is held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of November every year.</p>

	<p>RSRs reported that PPP department felt that expectations were not clear in relation to preparation for the event and roles on the day. It was reiterated that standard emails and reminders are sent to Heads of Departments, Sections, and Programme Admin Teams in advance of the event to provide guidance for the day. More detailed information including examples of the types of materials that could be presented on the information tables was provided at the Programme Managers Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> October and SF said that she is always on hand to provide further guidance if required. There was agreement that it would be helpful for sample open day materials to be stored on the shared drive for use in future events, which would help continuity as new staff members join departments.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> CT to collate generic information and materials for the PPP department and store on the shared drive as example material that can be referred to for future Open Days.</p>
9	<p><b>EDI update – Philippa Mills</b></p> <p>PM explained that data is currently being analysed to look into equity across the Institute and encouraged both student and staff completion of the survey. PM noted that they are aiming to address issues by appointing Champions to cover designated areas.</p> <p><b>Student Focus Group (ID)</b></p> <p>ID reported that DR has recently joined the focus group and encouraged more volunteers to join the group for wider input on ideas for how we can improve student experience. A pizza event is being planned (details to be confirmed).</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> RSRs to collate feedback from cohorts to report to ID, DR, or PM.</p>
10	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>24<sup>th</sup> March 2020 – 12noon – 13.30, Lower Ground Floor Seminar Room</p>

Summary of Action Points: Date of Meeting	Item	Action	By Whom	Status
12/11/2019	4	<p>RSRs to feedback any ideas for improved research log functionality to CT.</p> <p>ER to provide CT with student software requirements (which software and why).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>CT to consider how to manage institute-wide Post Doc support service for PhD students.</p> <p>CT to discuss student canteen prices with Tansy.</p>	<p>RSRs</p> <p>ER</p> <p>CT</p> <p>CT</p> <p>CT</p>	<p>O</p> <p>O</p> <p>O</p> <p>O</p> <p>O</p>
12/11/2019	6	<p>RSRs to feedback requirements re. PGR related induction processes to SF by 9<sup>th</sup> December.</p> <p>SF to attend department admin meeting for Q&amp;A session with Sophie Elgood and admin staff.</p> <p>SF to create document that outlines induction roles for Research Degrees Office vs. Research &amp; Teaching Department admin team.</p>	<p>RSRs</p> <p>SF</p> <p>SF</p>	<p>O</p> <p>O</p> <p>O</p>
12/11/2019	8	<p><u>Induction</u> CT to review the induction material to reduce duplication across induction events where possible.</p> <p><u>Open Day</u> CT to collate generic information and materials for the PPP department and store on the shared drive as example material that other departments can refer to for future Open Days.</p>	<p>CT</p> <p>CT</p>	<p>O</p> <p>O</p>
12/11/2019	9	<p><u>Student Focus Group</u> RSRs to collate feedback from cohorts on student experience to report to ID, DR, or PM.</p>	<p>RSRs</p>	<p>O</p>