



GOS ICH
STAFF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Meeting to be held on

Wednesday 24th June 2020 at 12.00noon
Virtual – via Microsoft TEAMS

Minutes

Present: Prof Claire Thorne, Departmental Graduate Tutor (Research) - Co-Chair
Annie Murphy, Research Degrees Administrator – (Minutes)
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)
Prof Hannah Mitchison, Postgraduate Research Tutor, Genetics and Genomic
Medicine (GGM)
Patricia Hunter, RTDR, Infection, Immunity, Inflammation (III)
Sophie Bennett, RTDR, Population, Policy and Practice (PPP)
Jeshmi Jeyabalan Srikanan, RTDR, Genetics and Genomic Medicine (GGM)
Natasha Schoeler, RTDR, Developmental Neurosciences (DN)
Dr Jessica Pickles, RTDR, Developmental Biology & Cancer (DBC)

Student Representation (RSRs):

Claudiu Cozmescu – Lead RSR – Chair, GGM, Year 1
Diana Rosenthal, RSR, DBC, Year 2, 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
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
Tiago Mendes Martins, RSR, GGM, Year 3
Raasib Mahmood, RSR, DBC, Year 1
Kerry-Anne Kite, RSR, III, Year 2

Apologies:

Stella Fusco, Senior Research Degrees Administrator
Ivan Doykov, RSR, GGM, Year 2, EDI Student Focus Group
Kathryn Hesketh, RTDR, Population, Policy and Practice (PPP)

1	<p>Welcome and introductions</p> <p>CC and CT welcomed the committee to the meeting.</p>
2	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting 19th November 2019</p> <p>Minutes agreed and approved.</p>
3	<p>Matters Arising from the minutes</p> <p>To be addressed via the Agenda</p>
4	<p>Recent developments for attention of research students</p> <p>a) <u>Research Log update</u></p> <p>The recent updates to the student research log have been more noticeable for staff than students. It was clarified that the 9 month progress review had been added in line with the Thesis Committee meeting points for new students. Students were notified by email to ignore the additional review points if they have already past these points in their timelines.</p> <p>b) <u>Monthly stipend payments</u></p> <p>Monthly stipend payments will be made with effect from 1st October 2020.</p> <p>c) <u>Statistics support (RDC)</u></p> <p>i) Postdocs support</p> <p>No further update – to be added to the agenda for discussion at next SSCC meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: Sophie Bennett to contact Kathryn Hesketh about Post Doc support for statistics and feedback updates to CT.</p> <p>ii) Statistics hub on SysMIC distance learning platform</p> <p>A total of 200 free places were made available to UCL PhD students on SysMIC, an e-learning resource for part-time study in mathematical, computational and statistical approaches to the study of biological systems. TM summarised his experience of using SysMIC; the platform provides online webinars and associated study materials for independent learning, and the support team are helpful in responding to queries quickly. The course is considered to be quite intensive, however, the materials are helpful, particularly as a starting point for bioinformatics skills development.</p> <p>It was noted that the course is a good opportunity for students who are currently not able to access the lab, but it was not clear whether the course materials could be accessed by all students on an ad-hoc basis.</p> <p>ACTION: TM to share SysMIC email correspondence and contact details for the Manager Hannah Heaven with CT.</p>

5	<p>Thesis Committees (TCs)</p> <p>It was reiterated that the Thesis Committee (TC) meetings are intended to be helpful for students and should continue over the closure period where possible. However, it was reassured that the department is taking a pragmatic view in light of the current closure period, for example, where students are having difficulties scheduling meetings due to committee members being heavily involved in clinical work during the pandemic (e.g. allowing the first two progress review meetings to be combined). It was clarified that the RDO did not circulate information in relation to the expectations of TC meetings during the UCL closure period as students have been directed to the guidance on the UCL Doctoral School webpage. However, CT suggested that RSRs reiterate the above message to department cohorts.</p> <p>Overall students have found the TC meetings helpful. It has been constructive for students to receive input from a range of colleagues with complementary expertise and for students to be challenged by external members to articulate their project objectives from different perspectives. However, the additional workload in organising the meetings and tasks was noted and students reported that there was not enough guidance on where documents should be uploaded on the research log.</p> <p>It was reported that Faculty have been receptive to feedback that some students found the first TC meeting very stressful and the written report was too long. RSRs suggested that a formal evaluation of the process is carried out to assess student experience of TCs at ICH. AS confirmed the original plan to collate feedback from first year students after the second TC Meeting has been postponed due to the UCL closure, but it is expected that feedback will be sought from first year students soon to be discussed at Faculty level and above.</p> <p>ACTION: RSRs to feedback to cohorts that TC meetings should continue, where possible, over the UCL closure period.</p>
6	<p>COVID-19 and PGR:</p> <p>a) Feedback on student support (remote supervision; wellbeing; financial – extension etc)</p> <p>RSRs reported a low response rate to requests for feedback from student cohorts. Generally responsive students confirmed they had already completed the departmental survey circulated before Easter, but it raised some concerns for other students who could be slipping through the net.</p> <p>i) <u>Research progress</u></p> <p>Students reported low levels of concentration, slow progress working at home and concerns over adequate data collection during the UCL closure period. The additional stress caused by the lack of clarity over when things will resume to normal was also acknowledged. It was advised that students should discuss any concerns with their supervisors (or TCs for new students) and consider potential changes to their projects if necessary. CT reassured that the postgraduate team can help to facilitate any difficult discussions, for example, if there have been issues with supervision.</p> <p>It was noted that non-lab based students are not likely to be able to return to ICH in the near future. It was encouraged that students make effective use of their time working from home by participating in online courses (e.g. LinkedIn). It was reiterated that these distance learning courses can be added to the research log manually for students to accrue skills development training points.</p>

ACTION: AS to raise skills development points for student participation in distance learning courses with the Doctoral School to include in student communications.

It was suggested that supervisors should start to hold journal clubs, if they are not already, which could be run as section rather than supervision groups. AS explained that MSc students have responded positively about BAR (Blackboard Available Room), a virtual social space run by the Dental school using Blackboard Collaborate, and there are plans to facilitate more virtual chat rooms for students across UCL to help students feel less isolated over the closure period.

ii) Supervision

Some students have reported feeling stressed by the increased frequency of supervision meetings over the closure period. Scheduling meetings around the supervisors' availability has often been difficult and inconvenient in some cases (e.g. at short notice or outside of regular work hours). It was acknowledged that additional factors may be contributing to supervisor availability over the UCL closure period (e.g. child care or clinical work). However, it was agreed there should be clear communication and flexibility on both sides and meetings should be pre-booked in advance to give plenty of notice, even if these meetings fall outside of usual work hours.

iii) UCL Stipend Extension Scheme - for final year students

Guidance for the UCL Stipend Extension Scheme has been circulated by the UCL Doctoral School. RSRs reported that the lengthy delay in this information being made available has caused a lot of anxiety for final year students. CT explained that the scheme has been a very complex process for the UCL Doctoral School to organise, and firm confirmation of funding availability was necessary before further details could be provided on how students could apply. The scheme requires eligible students to complete an online form which has been circulated to all PhD students. The form will then be forwarded to the department to undergo various levels of approval, before the student and supervisor are notified of the final outcome by the UCL Doctoral School.

iv) CRS extensions and financial support

Concerns were raised with respect to the impact of delays on first and second students, who are not eligible to apply for the UCL Stipend Extension Scheme. It was noted that all students have been granted an initial extension to CRS to cover the disruption period - 15 months for full-time students and 30 months for PT students - and it was confirmed there will be more leniency with respect to access to facilities during CRS. It was clarified that final year students are being prioritised for stipend extensions at present, but the Doctoral School will be reviewing the disruption for first and second year students in the next academic year. It was noted that any support available for first and second year students will be dependent on UCL's financial situation.

AS reported that the Doctoral School is encouraging new student registrations to begin at the start of the Autumn term as the first couple of months of research can be conducted remotely in most cases.

v) Interruption of study

It was acknowledged that students are now approaching a point beyond the initial disruption period covered by the 3-month stipend and CRS extensions, and may feel

more inclined at this stage to consider applying for an interruption of study. The process for applying for an interruption of study was clarified; the end date of the interruption can be extended closer to the time if necessary and it is possible for a student to return earlier than their expected return date if they wish to do so. Although it is not normally recommended, there is currently more scope to allow for short-term interruptions of a minimum of one month. It was noted that stipend extensions granted by UCL would be based on the assumption that the student has not interrupted during the disruption period. However, applications from students who have already interrupted would still be considered and it was clarified that those students would not be disadvantaged as long as the student had not interrupted for a lengthy period.

vi) International students returning home

RSRs queried whether it is still recommended for international students to return home, if they have not already done so. It was advised that students should discuss the likely timeframe for returning to ICH with their supervisor. If the research is not lab-based and does not involve highly sensitive data, it is likely the student will not be prioritised to return to ICH in the near future. In this case, it was suggested that it would be sensible for the student to consider moving back home if this would reduce living costs and effects of isolation. On the other hand, if a student cannot work remotely from their home location, they should apply for an interruption of study.

It was clarified that full tuition fees still apply for international students who have chosen to return home to work remotely. The fee reduction for students on study leave is only available to those who are conducting data collection outside of the UK as part of their research plan. It was confirmed stipend payments will not be affected for students who have returned home unless a formal interruption of study has been applied. Tier 4 students are likely to need to apply for visa extensions to return to UCL. The Doctoral School are liaising closely with the Student Immigration Advice team to keep students informed of any developments.

vii) Student Wellbeing

It was reiterated that the Student Support and Wellbeing Team are available to any students who need support. A range of resources are available for UCL students including free access to SilverCloud, an online CBT programme which is currently used by the NHS. (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/health-wellbeing/wellbeingucl/mental-health/find-support/online-cbt-tools>). A Psychology department with UCL are in the process of setting up a system where students can submit their problems to be worked through by a professional psychologist.

ACTION: CT to share link to Psychology student wellbeing support system for students once this becomes available.

b) Feedback on remote events (e.g. 3MT, training)

i) 3MT Competition

CT thanked the RSRs, particularly CC and ER, for their hard work in the organisation of 3MT event by Microsoft Teams.

It was reported that 3 students at ICH were put forward to the Faculty level 3MT heat:

- Alice Armitage (won 1st place)
- Emma Raywood (won People's Choice Award)
- Kevin Cao

The video recordings of the presentations were too poor quality on Teams, but the Faculty webpages have been updated with audio recordings of the 3 Faculty winners and a link to the UCL final which is available through Facebook.

ii) Hugh Kearns Workshop – Staying Well during your PhD

CT thanked students who had attended the 'Staying Well during your PhD' workshop, which was run remotely on Teams by Dr Hugh Kearns in May. The slides, resources and video recordings are available on Moodle – and it was encouraged that new students are directed to this resource for which they can claim skills training points.

iii) Discussion on return to ICH (pilot and beyond)

The pilot has started for researchers to make a phased return to ICH; currently 10% of researchers have been allowed to return and the next wave will increase to 25%. There are morning and afternoon shifts for researchers to have access to facilities, so effectively groups could have 20% of researchers return to ICH at present.

RSRs reported that communication had not been clear regarding the phased return to ICH. It was clarified that the prioritisation of which students should return has been managed entirely by the supervisors and it is the responsibility of the supervisors to disseminate the information to their students.

Lab-based students and Post Docs are currently prioritised for the return to ICH, while those who are largely office-based will be expected to continue to work from home until further notice. It was clarified that returning to ICH to collect belongings from offices is a separate process.

Concerns were raised with respect to the phased return affecting research quality. AS reiterated that the lost research time cannot be quantified to a degree to which it can be taken into consideration in viva examinations; the research must sufficiently meet the standard of a PhD. It was strongly advised that students review their project plans early next year to see where modifications could be made to ensure that project objectives will be achievable to the standard of a PhD.

iv) Teaching opportunities with remote teaching in Term 1 2020/21

Arena One courses require students to have previous teaching experience and RSRs were asked to express interest in opportunities available for remote teaching in Term 1 2020/21. It was acknowledged that remote teaching requires more support than face-to-face teaching (e.g. moderation and technical support, as well as input to teaching content) – and there are likely to be more opportunities coming up for PhD students to get involved. It was noted that teaching in pairs between senior and junior researchers can work well as a form of mentoring for students who wish to gain teaching experience.

A PGTA Hub developed through Arena and the Change Makers Project, is now available for students to search and sign up for teaching opportunities - <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/pg-teaching-opportunities-hub/> .

It was noted that PhD students would normally have the opportunity to support laboratory-based MSc students, who will have transitioned into more desk-based work, leaving PhD students with less opportunities to provide such support. A document is being developed with the Faculty Tutor for Medical Sciences to set out guidance for PhD students to continue to support MSc students (e.g. statistics support). However, it was reiterated that this type of work would not be paid.

	<p>ACTION: CT to discuss with HB and AW about paid teaching opportunities available for PhD students over the remote working period.</p>
7	<p>a) Recruitment of RSRs for 2020/21</p> <p>CC explained that recruitment for the RSR roles would begin over the summer months and reminded RSRs to submit expressions of interest if they wish to continue in their role. CT thanked all the RSR's for their contribution this year and added that it is hoped that the current 1st and 2nd year RSR's will continue their roles into the next academic year.</p> <p>b) Election of Lead RSR for 2020/21</p> <p>CT thanked DR for her contribution as Lead Rep for the most part of 2019-20 academic year and nominated CC to continue his role as Lead RSR for 2020/21. However, RSRs are welcome to submit expressions of interest if they wish to do so and an election will be run if there are more nominations.</p> <p>ACTION: RSRs to submit expressions of interest to the call for RSRs from the ICH Research Degrees Office if they wish to continue their role into 2020/21.</p>
8	<p>Cohort Building - Academic and Social Events:</p> <p>a) <u>Proposal for skill exchange between students</u></p> <p>CC explained that the LCMB runs a successful and well attended skill exchange programme between Postgraduate students and PhD students. Feedback was requested from RSRs on running a similar programme at ICH.</p> <p>JP reported that the Early Careers Researchers group have advertised a few skills workshops which offer the chance for students to ask questions to an expert and aim to run approximately once every two months. The workshops have been well attended by DBC prior to the closure period, and it was agreed that a broader conversation to expand student attendance to these workshops would be helpful.</p> <p>ACTION: RSRs to arrange meeting to draft a proposal identifying the key skills sought by students and potential candidates to deliver workshops for skills exchange programme.</p> <p>b) <u>Postgraduate Society update</u></p> <p>It was confirmed that MK will be stepping down as President of the PG Society and further discussions will be required for the appointment of another student to the role.</p> <p>CS raised that student events had stopped over the closure period and enquired whether the remaining budget funds could be rolled over to the next financial year to create a student hardship fund. If not, it was requested whether the unspent funds could be re-allocated to prizes for remote events (e.g. quizzes) going forwards. It was suggested RSRs could link up with student representatives across the Faculty to increase numbers for remote events going forwards.</p> <p>ACTION: AM to discuss budget allocation and rollover with Tansy Jones.</p>

	ACTION: RSRs to meet to decide who will be responsible for organising the Postgraduate Society events over the next term and feedback any ideas for remote events to MK or CS.
9	<p>EDI update - Black Lives Matter discussion</p> <p>The EDI Committee is currently working out the best response to address the issues raised through the Black Lives Matter discussions. It was noted from the ICH Town Hall meeting that the Institute must identify clear actions to be taken to help address the issues raised. DR and PM have discussed possible strategies going forwards, e.g. recommended book lists and breakout dialogues. However, further information on the audience demographics to the Black Lives Matter discussions would be useful to identify where the results may be skewed in live polling of questions (e.g. numbers of staff vs. students). It was also noted that EDI should be kept in mind for future appointments to committees across the Institute.</p>
10	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>TBC</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 9th December.</p> <p>SF to create document that outlines induction roles for Research Degrees Office vs. Research & Teaching Department admin team.</p>	<p>RSRs</p> <p>SF</p>	<p>O</p> <p>O</p>
12/11/2019	8	<p>CT to review the induction material to reduce duplication across induction events where possible.</p>	<p>CT</p>	<p>O</p>

		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.	CT	O
12/11/2019	9	RSRs to collate feedback from cohorts on student experience to report to ID, DR, or PM for Student Focus Group.	RSRs	O
24/06/2020	4	Sophie Bennett to contact Kathryn Hesketh about Post Doc Statistics support and feedback updates to CT.	SB / KH	O
24/06/2020	4	TM to share SysMIC email correspondence and contact details for the SysMiC Manager with CT.	TM	O
24/06/2020	5	RSRs to feedback to cohorts that TC meetings should continue, where possible, over the UCL closure period.	RSRs	O
24/06/2020	6	AS to raise skills development points for student participation in distance learning courses with the UCL Doctoral School to include in student communications.	AS	O
24/06/2020	6	CT to share link to Psychology student well-being support system for students once this becomes available.	CT	O
24/06/2020	6	CT to discuss paid teaching opportunities available for PhD students over the remote working period with HB and AW.	CT	O
24/06/2020	7	RSRs to submit expressions of interest to ICH RDO if they wish to continue their role.	RSRs	C
24/06/2020	8	RSRs to arrange meeting to draft a proposal for Skills Exchange Programme, identifying the key skills sought by students and potential candidates to deliver workshops.	RSRs	O
24/06/2020	8	AM to discuss PG Society and Student Mentor budgets with Tansy Jones.	AM	C
24/06/2020	8	RSRs to meet to decide who will be responsible for organising the PG Society Events over the next term and feedback any ideas for remote events to MK or CS.	RSRs	O