



**UCL Probationary Lecturer and Research Fellow Scheme:
Guidelines for Probationary Lecturers, Research Fellows,
Heads of Department, and Mentors 2014**

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to guide Lecturers and Research Fellows who are participating in the UCL Probationary Lecturer and Research Fellow Scheme, and members of staff who are responsible for providing support to UCL Probationary Lecturers and Research Fellows and assessing progress within the probationary process. UCL takes equal opportunity very seriously. For details of the UCL Equal Opportunity Policy, please refer to the [UCL HR website](#).

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2. Probation at UCL - A Partnership

The UCL Probationary Scheme for Lecturers and Research Fellows enables staff in the early years of their career to develop their talents as members of the UCL community committed to academic excellence. This is achieved through a partnership between:

- **Probationary Lecturers or Research Fellows** who are responsible for their own career development. They are expected to take ownership of their professional development through self-assessment, researching on opportunities offered by UCL, developing and implementing a professional development plan (PDP.)
- **Heads of Department** who are responsible for monitoring the professional development of their staff during the probation period and for putting in place an appropriate framework of support (progressive workload, mentoring, professional development opportunities, annual reviews).
- **Mentors** who are appointed by the Head of Department as soon as the contract of employment has been issued by HR Division to new members of staff and who are responsible for providing support and encouragement within the Department throughout the probationary period.
- **The UCL Arena Centre for Research-based Education (UCL Arena) and the UCL Doctoral School** whose staff provide support to UCL staff who are responsible for teaching and for supporting student learning.
- **UCL HR** staff who are responsible for the Probationary Scheme and who provide advice on the length of the probationary period and probationary requirements. They are custodians of the UCL regulatory framework.
- **Other Corporate Support Services and Units** which provide support to academic activities at UCL.

3. Probation at UCL - Policy

The Purpose of Probation

Probation is a period of professional development and performance review during which UCL provides training and guidance to help newly appointed Lecturers and Research Fellows become fully effective members of their department and of the institution.

- Demonstrate independence and originality of their research programme(s). This could include sustained quality output in peer-reviewed international journals – or other scholarly outputs of quality as appropriate to their field – successful applications for research grants and the ability to manage a research team (where appropriate to the discipline.)
- Demonstrate that they have developed a scholarly and reflective approach to teaching, i.e. the ability to reflect critically on their teaching and on the effectiveness of their students' learning and to propose innovative solutions to enhance student learning, including research-led teaching, the use of learning technologies and the many student-focused teaching methods (peer-assisted learning, problem-based teaching, learning oriented assessment, etc...).

The Requirement to Undergo Probation

All non-clinical Lecturers and Research Fellows appointed to UCL are subject to a three-year probationary term, which exceptionally may be reduced if they have significant teaching and research experience (normally at least three years full time).

Some newly appointed Lecturers and Research Fellows may have satisfactorily completed part or all of a probationary scheme at another institution. In such cases, at the discretion of the Head of Department in consultation with the UCL Human Resources Division, the probationary requirements for teaching may be amended.

Part-time Lecturers and Research Fellows normally follow the same scheme as those holding permanent posts.

Members of staff at UCL who are not Lecturers or Research Fellows but are involved in teaching or the support of learning are advised to discuss with their Heads of Department whether it would be beneficial to participate voluntarily in the probationary scheme.

The Components of the Probationary Lecturer and Research Fellow Scheme

A satisfactory report from the Head of Department is required following the three annual reviews of the probationer's progress.

Probationary Lecturers and Research Fellows who have little or no experience of teaching in higher education prior to joining UCL but who teach as part of their role, are expected to participate in UCL Arena Two, or if appropriate and with the authorisation of their Head of Department, a course in another HE institution (eligible programmes will normally bear university awarded credits, or be accredited by the Higher Education Academy). Research Fellows without teaching responsibilities are not required to undertake a teaching qualification.

A mandatory briefing session on PhD Supervision which is run by the UCL Doctoral School.

A mandatory e-learning module “Diversity in the Workplace” which must be completed within the first six weeks of joining UCL. This is available on [Moodle](#).

Exemption from UCL Arena Two

The Head of Department may consider whether there is a case for exemption from the award-bearing professional development course. Such exemption may be allowed if the probationer has completed an equivalent programme in another HE Institution or has extensive teaching experience (at least three years full-time teaching responsibilities including lecturing, course design and assessment).

The Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow with teaching responsibilities must make their case by completing an [Exemption Form](#) and with the approval of their Head of Department, submit it to UCL Arena, whereby it will be considered by the Director of UCL Arena, on behalf of the Vice Provost (Education).

Non-completion of Probation

Any cases where probation has not been completed satisfactorily will be referred to an *ad hoc* panel of the Academic Promotions Committee (APC), made up of a Dean/Vice Dean (who is the Chair) plus two members of the Committee, normally one professorial and one non-professorial. All review forms should be made available to the panel which will then be expected to meet the probationer and the Head of Department prior to making a decision on the case.

The *ad hoc* panel may recommend:

- to waive a specific requirement from the above list;
- the termination of the appointment; or
- in certain circumstances an extension of probation for a period of up to two additional years.

The probation period may be extended when although the member of staff does not meet the requirements for successful completion, there is a strong expectation that, with more time and support, problems that have been identified can be overcome. Probation may also be extended when a member of staff has been absent from UCL for a period of time (for example, on sick leave or maternity leave) and has been unable to complete the probationary programme.

Appeals Procedure

If the *ad hoc* panel confirms a recommendation to terminate the appointment, the probationer may appeal. The appeal will be made to the Provost, who will set up an appeal panel consisting of one of UCL's Deans as chair, a Head of Department (preferably in a kindred subject), plus one of the non-professorial representatives on the UCL Academic Promotions Committee.

Members of the appeal panel shall not be members of the appellant's department, or members of the *ad hoc* panel.

All review reports will be made available to the appeal panel and the panel will interview the probationer and the Head of Department and other such persons as they consider appropriate.

The decision of the appeal panel is final.

Notice on the Termination of an Appointment

Where termination of an appointment is recommended, the procedure should be started early enough to ensure that the probationer is given three months' notice within the period of the probationary appointment. The formal review procedure outlined above does not preclude informal feedback being given whenever the opportunity occurs and any problems should be discussed when they are identified.

4. UCL Standards - Professional Development for Teaching

Principles

UCL policies ensure that part-time staff have the same rights and opportunities as full-time staff.

Probationary requirements at UCL ensure that teaching meets the UK professional standards framework as defined by the Quality Assurance Agency and the Higher Education Academy.

Probationary requirements offer flexibility for Heads of Departments to tailor support to the needs of Lecturers and Research Fellows, whether on a full-time or part-time contract. Much support will be provided within the Department itself (such as induction, mentoring, peer observation of teaching, Teaching Committee etc.) and every new member of staff should be fully briefed about these opportunities.

Heads of Department should encourage full-time and part-time staff to propose a professional development plan which is tailored to their needs. UCL Lecturers and Research Fellows should plan their professional development and work with their Heads of Department and mentors to identify what support they require. This self-assessment is crucial during the Probation period and should become an integral part of a well-managed academic/professional career.

The UCL Arena Centre offers, through the UCL Arena Scheme, a full academic development programme to UCL staff who teach, which meets both the needs of Probationary Lecturers and Research Fellows with little or no experience of teaching in higher education and those of experienced staff for continuous professional development. Any enquiries about this Scheme should be made [to arena@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:arena@ucl.ac.uk).

UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE

The Government white paper, *The Future of Higher Education* (2003), proposed the development of national professional standards for teaching in HE as a basis for accredited training for all staff.

The publication in February 2011 of the [UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in HE](#) is the fulfilment of this commitment.

The framework aims to act as:

- an enabling mechanism to support the professional development of staff engaged in supporting learning;
- a means by which professional approaches to supporting student learning can be fostered through creativity, innovation and continuous development;
- a means to support consistency and quality of the student learning experience;
- a means of demonstrating to students and other stakeholders the professionalism that staff bring to the support of the student learning experience.

Heads of Department and Mentors should draw the attention of Lecturers and Research Fellows to:

- The [Quality Assurance Agency](#) – an independent body funded in 1997 to “safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education”. This is done by “working with higher education institutions to define academic standards and quality, and carrying out and publishing reviews against these standards”.
- The [Higher Education Academy](#) – whose role is to be a nationwide focus for enhancing teaching, learning and students' experiences in higher education, working with institutions, discipline groups and individual staff within the four countries of the UK.

Provision at UCL to meet the UK Professional Standards for teaching and supporting learning in HE

UCL ensures that teaching activities meet the UK Professional and Quality Standards through the establishment of strategic priorities, procedures and mechanisms and a wide range of professional development courses and services.

Heads of Department must draw the attention of Probationary Lecturers and Research Fellows who teach to the following:

- UCL Arena Two, the UCL Academic Practice Pathway leading to Fellowship of the HEA. Further details are available from arena.two@ucl.ac.uk. UCL offers this course to all members of staff on the payroll who are included in the annual staff review scheme (this does not apply to Visiting Lecturers, Honorary posts and staff on an “as and when” contract).
- Support for PhD supervision. In line with the QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Section 1: Postgraduate Research programmes) information and guidance.

Probationary Lecturers and Research Fellows and those who are new to PhD supervision can be appointed as principal supervisors but they must be members of a supervisory team where the second supervisor has had experience of successful principal supervision.

All staff who are new to PhD supervision are requested to attend a briefing session offered twice a year by the [UCL Doctoral School](#) which is an introduction to:

- the procedures for PhD study as required by UCL;
- the UCL Doctoral School and its role;
- the expectations of students;
- good supervisory practice;

It is strongly recommended that all PhD Supervisors also attend the one-day workshop [Effective Research Student Supervision at UCL](#).

Self-assessment and analysis of professional development needs

Heads of Department, Probationary Lecturers and Research Fellows and mentors are advised to discuss and document the following:

- The Probationary Lecturer’s and Research Fellow’s teaching experience and the gaps which may exist in their knowledge or expertise prior to joining UCL as regards the type of teaching they may need in their Department:
 - Lecturing
 - Leading seminars
 - Giving demonstration in labs
 - Tutoring (one to one or small group)
 - Designing a new course or reviewing a course

- Designing teaching material
- Designing assessment (formative and summative)
- Marking student work & providing feedback to students
- Using learning technologies
- Internationalising the curriculum
- Co-ordinating a course (working within a course team) etc.
- The support provided within the Department:
 - Induction
 - Mentoring
 - Peer observation of teaching
 - Others
- The following questions may prompt further reflection and lead to an action plan:
 - Is the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow seeking accreditation by the Higher Education Academy?
 - With whom will the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow discuss how to develop expertise as a teacher?
 - How does the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow propose to share ideas about effective practice with other teachers?
 - What opportunities for professional development as a teacher will the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow investigate in the Faculty and other parts of UCL?
 - Is the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow able to start putting together a professional development plan for the next academic year or do he/she need assistance?

Vice-Provost (Education)

The [UCL Teaching and Learning](#) website is a useful source of information and gives access to key UCL strategic documents as well as an insight in the activities run by Professor Anthony Smith, Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs).

The [UCL Arena Centre for Research-based Education](#) works closely with the Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs) to provide a wide range of programmes and activities in support of learning and teaching at UCL and to contribute to institutional research in order to inform decisions.

UCL Arena staff are experts in a wide range of disciplines relevant to teaching and learning and can offer solutions tailored to the needs of UCL Departments and Faculties as well as those of individual members of staff. In particular Probationary Lecturers and Research Fellows can request an informal meeting to discuss their professional development needs and to assess which course(s) may be of benefit to them.

The UCL Arena academic development programme includes three strands of teaching, serving different groups of staff:

- **UCL Arena One** – Teaching Associate Program for Postgraduate Teaching Assistants.
- **UCL Arena Two** – Academic Practice Pathway for Lecturers and Teaching Fellows on probation, leading to Fellowship of the HEA. Lecturers and Teaching Fellows can gain a Higher Education Academy Fellowship and also a UCL Arena Fellowship through participating in the UCL Arena Two ‘Academic Practice Pathway’. As this practice-based qualification is fully recognised by HESA as a ‘teaching in higher education’ qualification, it fulfils probationary requirements.
- **UCL Arena Open** – a flexible menu of events available to all staff, including leaders of education, who can opt to participate in and/or lead sessions such as academic practice seminars or innovation workshops for colleagues. They may also choose to submit a written or oral application for Associate Fellowship, Fellowship or Senior Fellowship of the HEA, to gain formal professional recognition for their experience and expertise.

Other sources of information and support at UCL

Other sources of information and support at UCL can be found by accessing the following links:

- [UCL HR Information for Probationary Lecturers and Research Fellows](#)
- [UCL HR Courses Run by Organisational Development](#)
- [UCL Careers Service](#)
- [UCL Digital Education Team \(Information Services\)](#)
- [UCL Library Services](#)
- [UCL Media Services](#)
- [UCL Medical Education](#)
- [UCL Museums and Collections \(Object-based Teaching\)](#)
- [PhD Supervision](#)

Sources of information and support outside UCL

There are many sources of information to support teaching and learning in Higher Education, some are generic while others will focus on issues relevant to specific disciplines.

Some organisations run events offering both professional development and networking opportunities and the most well-known are:

- [The Higher Education Academy](#) and its subject centres
- [Staff and Educational Development Association](#)

In addition some universities run courses available to staff from other HE institutions.

5. The Early Days -Induction Process

Principle

Starting a new job is usually a stressful situation, particularly in the early stages of one's career. A friendly and supportive environment dispels uncertainties and anxieties and the whole department has a part to play in this respect.

The emphasis throughout probation is on supported self-development. Staff are expected to make the mentoring and review systems, and their professional development plan, work for them.

If procedures are not working in the way intended, probationers should discuss this with their Head of Department or mentor.

Reference documents

Induction is an ongoing process for at least the [first year of probation](#).

All new members of staff should be referred to:

- This UCL Probationary Lecturer and Research Fellow Scheme – Guidelines for Probationary Lecturers and Research Fellows, Heads of Department, and Mentors.
- The UCL Academic Committee's Guidelines, known as [The Gold Book Guidelines for Good Practice](#).
- UCL's [Academic Manual](#).

Other staff in the Department

All staff involved in the induction process need to know the contribution they will be making to the probationer's understanding of departmental policies, structures and routines.

The Head of Department is responsible for appointing a mentor who will be closely involved in the induction of the probationer. However, an effective system for monitoring and assessing probationers' progress should not need to rely on mentors.

Diversity in the Workplace

UCL takes equal opportunity very seriously. For details of the UCL Equal Opportunity Policy, please refer to the [UCL HR](#) website.

In order to increase awareness of the implications of this policy, all new members of staff must complete an e-learning module entitled "Diversity in the Workplace" within the first six weeks of joining UCL. This module is available on [Moodle](#).

6. The Early Days – The Role of the Head of Department

Responsibilities

The Head of Department's main responsibilities with respect to probationary staff are:

- To establish and monitor arrangements for integrating the probationer into the department and for providing support throughout the probationary period.
- This includes a responsibility to ensure that a probationer's teaching commitment builds up gradually throughout that period.
- As part of these arrangements, to appoint a mentor for each probationer.
- To inform probationers of their duties and the standards expected of them in accordance with UCL's policies and procedures.
- To draw attention to relevant UCL regulations, including health and safety requirements.
- To review and report annually on probationers' progress and performance measured against the duties and standards asked of them.
- To ensure that all probationers are enrolled on UCL Arena Two and that they understand its purpose. They should be given the necessary support to gain maximum benefit from their participation in Arena Two.
- To ensure that all probationers are aware of the mandatory requirement to:
 - complete the e-learning module entitled [Diversity in the Workplace](#) within the first six weeks of joining UCL.
 - attend a briefing session on research supervision organised by the UCL Doctoral School.

As part of this procedure, the Head of Department may wish to observe probationers teach in various student learning situations or arrange for other senior colleagues to undertake this.

Probationary Lecturer's or Research Fellow's Workload

Probation is a developmental stage in an academic career. Probationers will normally undertake some teaching duties from the outset and, over the probationary period, experience as wide a range of learning and teaching situations as possible. They should be encouraged to reflect upon the learning process, to try out a range of methods and to develop the skills they require to become fully effective teachers.

Heads of Department should ensure that a probationer's workload is manageable, bearing in mind the very demanding nature of the probationary period. UCL's workload allocation policy can be found on the [UCL HR website](#).

The success of the Probationary Lecturer's or Research Fellow's professional development programme relies upon departmental support and benefits from the Head of Department's personal interest in this programme.

Appointing the Mentor

The mentor provides encouragement and support at a formative stage of a colleague's career. The role is that of confidant and critical friend, an understanding and trusted colleague outside the probationary review system. The Mentor's role is to assist in the development of the probationer's professional expertise. UCL's culture of excellence puts newly appointed members of staff under considerable pressure to demonstrate their effectiveness from the outset. In this situation it is particularly important that probationers have someone with whom to share dilemmas, concerns and issues.

A mentor/probationer partnership is more likely to be successful if the partners have similar values and research/teaching interests. For this reason it is usually helpful if Heads of department consult both probationer and prospective mentor before reaching a decision on any pairing. This is particularly appropriate with internal appointments and in other situations where the probationer and department have prior knowledge of each other.

Experience has shown that the key factor for successful mentoring is the commitment of the mentor to enhance the professional development of the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow; the objective is to ensure that the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow is supported to achieve their full potential. One other concern of the mentor will be to check that the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow has a good level of job satisfaction and wellbeing.

Successful mentors can either be:

- A member of staff relatively close in age and experience to themselves, someone who will recall 'what it's like to be a probationer'; or
- A more senior and experienced member of staff with whom the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow shares academic interests and who can become a good role model.

The Head of Department must make the final decision over the choice of mentor. Such decisions affect the balance of responsibilities in a department and may be influenced by various factors, logistic, cultural, etc. Also Heads of Departments will want to be sure that those who agree to become mentors understand and value the role and are prepared to undertake it.

In brief, mentors in this context should:

- Work at UCL;
- Be willing to engage and fulfil the responsibility of a mentor and maintain their own continuous professional development (CPD);
- Strive for excellence in teaching and be aware of recent developments in learning and teaching;
- Share academic interests as the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow;
- Be prepared to spend some time observing teaching sessions given by the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow and give formulative feedback.

Mentors need to be appointed before new staff take up their appointments so that they can establish a relationship with the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow during the induction process. UCL Arena is informed of the names of mentors.

Support for the Probationary Lecturer's or Research Fellow's Research

Notwithstanding the research experience of most newly appointed staff, Probationers often require guidance and support in the research role, both in their specialist field and with respect to more general matters of methodology and procedure. The most frequently voiced requests are for guidance on setting up a research project and help with grant applications. Less experienced researchers may need help with writing papers, making presentations, setting and achieving research targets and getting their writing published. Some probationers will receive this kind of help as a result of working alongside a more experienced colleague or from being a member of a research team. Where staff are engaged in their own individual research, the ideal situation is for the mentor to be sufficiently conversant with the field of study to advise on research as well as teaching. In some situations the Head of Department may need to appoint another member of the department specifically to take responsibility for advising a probationer on research.

Need for tailored support in some cases

Heads of Department should be aware that in some cases new members of staff will face specific difficulties and require tailored support during the induction, for instance if they have a disability.

Other examples include:

1. Because of their limited contact with UCL, it is often difficult for part-time staff to develop a sense of belonging, unless specific arrangements are made to integrate them. Some part-time staff, whose expertise has been gained outside universities, may lack experience of the culture and working environment of higher education.
2. Those who take up their posts having been students or research fellows/assistants in UCL are sometimes thought to require little induction. Their new role, however, is very different from their previous one and, like everyone else, they need support and guidance to come to terms with it.
3. Some Probationary Lecturers and Research Fellows start their appointment during the academic year. They can miss out on some of the formal parts of the induction process and experience delays in receiving basic information. Some plunge straight into their responsibilities with little time for preparation or proper briefing.
4. Some senior members of staff appointed to UCL come from different working environments. Although they are not required to participate in the Probationary

Lecturer and Research Fellow Scheme, their induction needs should not be overlooked.

- 5 Staff whose professional experience was mainly outside the UK may experience difficulties due to cultural differences and/or different approaches to learning and teaching. The induction process may need to include some background information about Higher Education in the UK.

The UCL Arena Centre can be contacted to provide additional support if necessary.

Assessing and Reviewing Progress and Performance

If Heads of Department have no means of maintaining personal contact with probationers and their work, they will need to involve another senior member of the department in the monitoring, observing and assessment process. It may be appropriate for this responsibility to be shared, for example between a member/leader of a research team and someone who co-teaches a course with the probationer. In situations where neither the Head of Department nor any other senior member of staff has regular insight into a probationer's work it will be necessary to set up a formal procedure for observing teaching and for reviewing research progress each year.

Senior staff involved in monitoring, observing and assessment should be made aware of their responsibilities from the beginning of the probationary period. Although the Head of Department undertakes an annual review of the probationer's progress and contribution to the department, any problems should be discussed as they arise and action to resolve them agreed.

Although Heads of Department may delegate monitoring, observing and review responsibilities, they should conduct the annual review meeting and complete the annual report themselves. This review meeting is a significant occasion for probationers: it is the means by which they receive formal indication of their progress in teaching and research, measured against the requirements of their post. If progress is unsatisfactory in any way, it is essential for the Head of Department to give precise details and to state what action needs to be taken to remedy weaknesses.

The meeting should be frank, constructive and detailed. It is an opportunity for Heads of Department to make a contribution to probationers' professional development and to review progress towards meeting probationary requirements.

The review meeting affords an opportunity for probationers to discuss any aspect of their work or career to which they wish to draw attention or on which they would like a management view, and to receive detailed feedback. Details of the annual review procedure are on the [UCL HR website](#).

7. The Early Days - Mentoring Relationship

Definition and Expected Outcomes

Mentoring is an informal, confidential and supportive process: the mentor does not have a management role in relation to the probationer and should not therefore be a Head of Department or appraiser.

The expected outcomes of a successful mentoring relationship for both parties would be:

That the Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow (Mentee):

- is clear about her/his role in the team in the Department and at UCL especially knowing how to manage time and activities for which they are responsible (research and teaching including curriculum and assessment design and review, delivery of courses and marking as appropriate);
- had been stimulated and challenged in her/his own thinking and approaches to their teaching, research and personal contribution to the Department
- has understood how to make the most of opportunities to develop their research within the context of the discipline / Department at UCL;
- benefited from several Peer Observation of Teaching sessions and received constructive feedback on her/his approach and attitude to their teaching;
- has received support with their assignments towards the completion of UCL Arena Two, or equivalent course if appropriate.

That the mentor:

- has clear evidence of an enabling responsibility within the Department showing the ability to develop and motivate colleagues;
- has developed new staff development skills (through facilitating research in a less experienced member of staff, coaching them towards a greater understanding of learning and teaching and helping them to identify opportunities for knowledge transfer to the wider community)
- had contributed to the leadership of the Department through the integration of new staff within a successful research and teaching team;
- has added to the evidence of their own professional development, thus contributing to their own career planning.

Establishing the Mentoring Relationship

Mentors are appointed by Heads of Department, usually after consultation with both the probationer and prospective mentor, to provide probationers with support and guidance throughout the probationary period. They therefore have a key part to play in the professional development of academic staff during the formative years of their career.

Many probationers will have course coordinators/supervisors, research team leaders and others directly responsible for advising them on particular aspects of their work. The mentor is a source of additional support, someone who provides advice in relation to the expected outcomes above and with whom the probationer can share problems and concerns in confidence. The mentor/probationer relationship is intended to be a partnership that informs and strengthens the probationer's academic activities through joint evaluation and discussion. The success of the relationship depends upon the commitment brought to it by both partners.

Mentors are not expected to know all the answers. They should aim to be an access point for information on the department and UCL and a channel for contacts with others. In this way they can provide a means of entry to a useful network of contacts and support for a new member of staff.

Mentors should make contact with probationers before they arrive in the department or immediately afterwards and discuss the mentoring relationship.

Probationers are expected to initiate meetings as necessary since the Mentors would most of the time be responding to the probationer's agenda. Probationers should not hesitate to raise with their mentors any queries or concerns they have in connection with their work or departmental routines and procedures. Problems are best dealt with as soon as they arise.

Support for the Research Role

The most frequently voiced requests for advice and support for the research role concern setting up a research project and help with grant applications. Less experienced researchers may need help with writing papers, making presentations, setting and achieving research targets and getting their work published. It should also be noted that the Organisational Development team normally provides courses dealing with most of these matters: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/od/research/>

Support for the Teaching Role

Mentors have a responsibility for helping probationers to develop their teaching expertise in the discipline. This is an ongoing role throughout the probationary period and one that can significantly influence the teaching aspirations and standards of a newly appointed colleague.

The major responsibility for achieving excellence in the teaching role must still rest with the individual teacher. However, it is now widely accepted that the process of self-development is made much more effective by systematic discussion, evaluation and guidance. The mentor's role is to assist this process by every means possible.

One of the mentor's key responsibilities is to observe probationers teach each year in various student learning situations and give constructive and confidential feedback. The probationer will need to advise the mentor of appropriate opportunities for this

purpose and to discuss how such observation can be managed as naturally and unobtrusively as possible.

Support for Managing Workload

Some probationers accrue departmental responsibilities very quickly. They are keen to get involved and their enthusiasm encourages others to invite them to take on additional tasks. The mentor should be mindful of the impact of such duties on the probationer's overall workload. Heads of Department have a responsibility to ensure that a probationer's teaching and other commitments build up gradually throughout the probationary period. This very necessary strategy for helping probationers in the early years of their career can soon be negated if they take on too many initiatives themselves or accept all the tasks that others suggest to them.

Prioritising and planning work within the time available can be challenging for those whose experience of managing the conflicting demands of teaching, research and administration may be limited. Today's probationers are under considerable pressure to achieve excellence on all fronts and, indeed, most are keen to be successful in every aspect of their work. Ultimately probationers have to solve this dilemma for themselves, but the mentor can usually provide some helpful guidelines.

Mentor/Probationary Lecturer or Research Fellow Partnership

The ways in which mentor/probationer partnerships function will vary according to the individuals concerned and the kind of working relationship they build together. If experiences and ideas are constantly shared and the seeking and giving of advice become a natural process, much of the agenda is likely to be dealt with incidentally. In some cases, a pattern of regular meetings may be useful. Whatever arrangements are made, they should be sufficiently flexible to allow for *ad hoc* consultation when required. The need is often for immediate practical advice.

A potential dilemma inherent in any mentoring system in which the mentor's role is supportive and non-judgmental is the extent to which the mentor should contribute to a review of the probationer's progress. Given that mentors may have as good an insight into the quality of a probationer's work as anyone in the department, it is unrealistic to assume that their opinion will never be sought by those responsible for monitoring and assessing a probationer's progress and development. Nevertheless in order to preserve the essence of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee, mentors should only provide such feedback in the mentoring context. In practice, these situations seem to be sensitively and professionally handled and rarely cause problems. Finally a mentoring relationship aspires to meet the needs of the probationer by focusing discussion and advice on actual situations as they occur. The aim is to anticipate and respond to the probationer's agenda and to create a relaxed relationship in which needs can readily be explored. The ideal partnership establishes a trust and mutual respect that encourage a free exchange of views and experiences, to the benefit of both parties.