UCL RESEARCH STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Annual Report
2017-18

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Executive summary

A Research Staff Development Programme was established within 2016-17 and has been consolidated in 2017-18, through effective collaboration across UCL, involving: Office for Vice Provost (Research), especially the Doctoral School, HR Organisational Development, UCL Careers, UCL Arena, UCL Culture, UCL Library Services and the Research Staff Consultative Group, with representation from Early Career Research Networks. The aim on doing so was to establish a collaborative approach to researcher development across the university, including the researcher community and key central/professional services.

Strategic Development has been a priority in 2017-18:

- A new Research Staff Development Strategy and Action Plan was created, setting a direction for greater and more visible Researcher Development for research staff at UCL.

- The HR Excellence Award was retained, signalling UCL's commitment to Researcher Development.

- A new Research Staff Code of Practice was devised, agreed and published.

- A funding bid extending to 2022 was submitted which set a course for expanded and enhanced Researcher Development for research staff at UCL.

Priorities for programme enhancement include: a greater emphasis on key areas such as Open Science, Research Integrity and greater collaboration with Early Career Research Networks to bring greater visibility to the mix of core transferable research and personal skills development centrally and specialist provision within the networks.

UCL should aim to become a centre of excellence for Researcher Development and create a world-leading Researcher Development offer commensurate with UCL's standing as a leading university. This will require greater systems support, special provision and staffing to support effective programme review, evaluation and development.

Remit of the Research Staff Development Programme

The Research Staff Development Programme (RSDP) was introduced in its current form in 2016-17. Its focus is the needs of Early Career Researchers (ECRs): that is research staff on postdoctoral research contracts, who currently number 2491. The RSDP is broadly equivalent to, but distinct from, the UCL Doctoral Skills Development Programme for postgraduate research students. It provides an advanced level of research skills, personal and professional development to develop UCL's research staff in line with the Research Staff Development Strategy 2017-2022 and the university's commitment to 'The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers'.

The Research Staff Development Strategy 2017-2022 has as its mission:

> 'To further the principal themes of UCL 2034 and UCL's Research Strategy by providing our research staff with a comprehensive, world-leading development programme capable of providing them with the specialist knowledge and skills required to succeed in their research roles, to provide them with the generic career knowledge, skills to do so and to encourage the independence and agency required to transit to a future role, whether within Higher Education or another sector.'

The RSDP in its current form, focuses on the provision of core transferable skills and behavioural development. Specialist and technical skills suitable for researchers working in specific disciplines fall within the domain of the programme, and are delivered within Faculties and Early Career Research Networks. Future work on the RSDP will identify opportunities for greater collaboration with Early Career Research Networks, such that a more cohesive development offering is available to researchers.

The content of the RSDP also guided by the domains and sub-domains of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF): researchers are supported with development activity in each area. Outputs from CROS and PIRLS surveys are also considered. The programme is commissioned annually, with learning events delivered by internal and external facilitators.

The RSDP is funded by UCL HR Organisational Development (UCL HR OD), including a contribution from the UCL Strategic Investment Fund (SIF). Strategic direction is provided by Research Staff Consultative Group (RSCG), chaired by the Pro-Vice-Provost (Doctoral School) and with representation drawn from UCL's central development functions and the Research Networks. Day-to-day operations are overseen by UCL HR OD.

The year in review: 2017-18

2017-18 saw the achievement of several key milestones in delivering UCL's approach to researcher development and the RSDP:

1. The Research Staff Development Strategy 2017-2022 was presented to, and agreed by, the Provost's Senior Management Team, providing UCL researchers for the first time with a strategy supportive of their development as research staff;

2. UCL retained the HR Excellence in Research Award, recognising our continuing commitment to implementing systems and practices supportive of researchers' career development and in line with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers;

3. Funds were made available to support a wider range of initiatives than previously. Initiatives supported in 2017-18 included:

   - The development by the Office of the Vice-Provost (Research) of online learning materials supportive of UCL's approach to research ethics and integrity;

   - A conference led by UCL Library Services in support of the Open Science agenda, in June 2018, and

   - The extension of UCL's Inclusive Advocacy programme to the researcher community;

4. The Research Staff Code of Practice was agreed by the RSCG and presented to the HR Policy Committee for information, with electronic and physical copies prepared for distribution in September 2018. This fulfils a requirement of the 2017-2022 Strategy;

5. A Working Group drawn from the RSCG membership was created and met in July 2018, with the aim of overseeing the commissioning, coverage and overall quality of the RSDP. (Terms of Reference included in Appendices)

Programme-specific observations

1. The RSDP ran from September 2017-July 2018 and delivered 137 events, offering 3,142 to 2,057 researchers. This compares to 77 courses offering 1,989 places to approximately 779 researchers the previous year.

2. Highlights of the 2017-18 RSDP were:

   - Induction for new UCL Research Staff:
     This is a central programme organised through HR Organisational Development and which ran twice in 2018-18. It aims to introduce new researchers to the relevant UCL services and benefits which can support them as staff and researchers. It also highlights key institutional and national drivers that promote research performance, opportunities on RSDP, support career development, and network with other researchers at UCL.

   - Leadership in Action (LiA):
     LiA is a three-day intensive experiential leadership course designed to prepare researchers for leadership in their chosen research field, or within the wider community. Three courses were held in 2017-18, of which one was organised and run in collaboration with Kings College London. LiA helps researchers explore the concept of leadership through a series of experiential exercises, to build their confidence and to consider how they can best transfer the learning to their research and wider activities.

- UCL Accredited Researcher Coach Programme
  This was a new development in 2017-18 and was introduced to encourage a greater coaching provision amongst the researcher community. The programme aim is to provide participants with the knowledge, skills and tools to promote the development of a coaching culture across the university and to provide coaching to colleagues within and outside of their area. This is an accredited programme designed to deliver a high calibre of operationally confident internal coaches without an immediate need for any onerous and time consuming studies outside of the structured programme.

Future Plans: 2018-19 and beyond

There is a widespread recognition that scope exists for UCL to build-on the foundation created by the RSDP since 2016-17, both in terms of greater and additional provision.

Discussions over the past year with the OVPR and the Research Staff Consultative Group (which includes representation from the Research Networks) have identified several areas where additional activity is required to deliver the Research Staff Development Strategy:

1. A greater focus on research ethics and integrity;

2. A more extensive provision of non-traditional approaches to learning and support, including career coaching provision, industry secondments and the strengthening of UCL's Early Career Networks;

3. Developing a greater understanding of the Open Science agenda and its implications for researchers;

4. Developing a more extensive teaching and education provision for researchers;

5. Leadership development for senior researchers, with a focus on Principal Investigators;

6. Providing a wider range of leaning events through the RSDP, with particular attention to research governance and organization.

Delivering the Researcher Development Strategy 2017-2022 and retaining our HR Excellence in Research Award necessitates the creation in 2018-19 of a combined action plan, with many of the actions required over the next 12 months. In addition to the above actions, these include:

1. Reviewing a UCL-wide approach to talent attraction and retention for researchers, as proposed in the HR Strategy;

2. Enhancing researchers'' satisfaction with the appraisal process as a vehicle for identifying career development opportunities;

3. Developing and implementing the UCL Global Competency Framework, with the aim of supporting UCL staff, including researchers, to develop international partnerships and to work in an increasingly global research community;

4. Developing stronger links between the centrally-provided RSDP and the Early Career Networks, to ensure a more integrated and comprehensive approach to researcher development;

5. Providing greater coaching and mentoring support, and

6. Exploring the scope to adopt a wider range of delivery channels, including blended and online learning.

It is also intended to increase the number of internal (UCL) facilitators on the Programme, to access and make available the research expertise from within the university and to optimise the allocation of our financial resource.

Many of the above activities will be progressed in association with members of the RSCG.

Systems, space and facilities

The RSDP is currently accessed by research staff through the UCL Single Training Booking System (STBS), which can be found on both the HR Organisational Development webpage and the UCL Research Staff Hub. This will change in 2018-19 with the introduction of MyHR, a new university-wide HR platform and which will fundamentally change the processes and systems that support the delivery of HR procedures across UCL. This is due for implementation in 2018-19 and will enable local decision making, streamline and automate HR processes and provide better reporting for managers. It is anticipated that this should make it easier to obtain accurate training statistics and records for researchers, with the longer-term benefit of being able to monitor more accurately the uptake of our provision by different researcher communities and to tailor our offering accordingly. Ongoing engagement with the MyHR team is, however, recommended, to ensure the system provides an optimal service to the research community.

Space remains a concern and a constraint to our research staff development plans. Currently any space requirement needs to be booked through UCL Estates' Room Booking team. Rooms are often made available at the last minute, with implications for the administration of the programme. A realistic solution would be to provide dedicated learning and development space for researchers, equal to our position as a world-renowned research-intensive university. It would provide a focal point for researcher development on campus and could also form part of a wider strategy to continue to attract the best Early Career Researchers (ECR) to UCL in the post-Brexit scenario by offering an approach to researcher development commensurate with our international research standing. In support of this a business case for a Researcher Development Centre is being prepared and will be progressed in 2018-19. In the interim the HR OD team will continue to work with the Room Bookings team to accommodate the Programme.

Communications

Communicating with ECRs and their Principal Investigators (PIs) remains challenging, given the number of researchers at UCL and their dispersal across the university.

The following communication channels are currently employed:

1. The UCL Research Staff Hub, embedded within the UCL HR OD webpage, provides researchers with a central resource including key documentation, information for new starters, training and development opportunities and links to the Research Networks;

2. 'The Week @ UCL' is used to communicate key RSDP-related messages to researchers, including new and available training opportunities;

3. A weekly newsletter is sent to all researchers, advising recipients of places on forthcoming events and encouraging them to apply; (Rochelle – is this true?)

4. Occasional communications are also issued to and through the Research Networks.

It is recognised that this is an area where improvements should be sought.

Feedback

As noted above, programme review in 2017-18 has revealed the need for enhanced systems support, which will in turn allow for more effective approaches to information gathering on the level of research staff engagement on the programme. Below is provided qualitative feedback from staff who attended courses on the RSDP in 2017-18.

An excellent course that perfectly blended confidence building and analytical thinking, as well as equipping participants with tools and activities to bolster the learnings going forward.

> [I would like to see] more … aimed at those making the transition from PhD to fixed term research contract.

> Follow-up in session with smaller numbers to enhance the impact of this course. 3 hours was good to give a flavour and get across the basics. An optional follow-up would help to build on it.

> [W]ell organised, prompt, insightful, positive energy coming out of all coaches and the director, meeting great UCL staff.

In general, we recognise the need for a greater Research Staff voice in the development of provision. Researchers related that they would appreciate more provision on writing and publishing, impact, resilience, assertiveness, impact and career transitioning (ie progressing in academia and beyond academia), as well as pathways through which to navigate the programme with progressive steps indicated.

Collaborations

The Research Staff Development Strategy 2017-2022 is founded on the premise of collaboration across the university and requires a co-ordinated approach by members of the RSCG if the associated Action Plan is to be met and the RSDP delivered. The following central UCL functions currently contribute to the RSDP:

- UCL Arena
- UCL Careers
- UCL Culture
- UCL HR Organisational Development
- UCL Library Services
- UCL Office of the Vice-Provost (Research).

Examples of the contribution made in 2017-18 by UCL functions includes 266 one-to-one and researcher-specific and 43 non-researcher-specific career coaching appointments with UCL Careers. UCL Careers also provided 13 Research Staff Specific Academic Careers Workshops, attended by 105 researchers, and 21 Non-Academic Careers Workshops for Research Staff, attended by 106 staff. In a different vein, UCL Culture provided a Public Engagement Skills and Practice event attended by 48 UCL researchers, aimed at increasing participants' skill, knowledge and confidence in creating and enabling public engagement activity, including applying for funding and creating external networks. The UCL Arena Centre for Research-Based Education supports researchers in two main areas: by working with Postdocs who teach through our Arena Open Programme, and by offering training and support to Research Supervisors. In 2017-18 provisions for research staff who teach, including highly successful 'microteaching' sessions, in which researchers deliver to their peers and receive feedback. These were highly rated amongst researchers, with sessions receiving an average of 4.8/5 in terms of satisfaction. Provision for supervisors involves three main elements: a mandatory Introduction to Research Student Supervision at UCL, a day-long workshop on Effective Research Supervision and a half-day workshop on Examining Research Doctorates. This year two sessions with invited speakers were also held. Attendance and average satisfaction with these events was highly rated. Development for supervisors will undergo substantial changes for the 2018/19 session, with an online course to replace the mandatory introduction and an expanded programme of events.

Collaboration also occurs within HR OD, between those responsible for researcher and those responsible for doctoral skills development. The scope for greater collaboration and to share learning/events between the two programmes has also been recognised in the organisational change procedure currently proceeding in HR OD.

An increasing amount of interaction, and a small amount of collaboration, with colleagues from other research-intensive universities took place during the year under review. The annual Vitae International Researcher Development Conference and subsequent Vitae events provided useful opportunities to meet with representatives from other universities and to discuss matters of interest. HR OD is also in contact with researcher development colleagues in other London Russell Group universities (and beyond), most recently visiting Cambridge to view their Postdoc Centre. A joint Leadership-in-Action programme was held again in 2017-18 in collaboration with Kings College London.

UCL is also represented on the LERU CARE Group (through HR OD) and which has provided an opportunity to contribute to the wider, European, researcher development initiative and to maintain an overview of the researcher development activity being progressed at a number of these institutions.

Appendices

Research Staff Consultative Group Working Group

Terms of Reference

Aim

The aim of the Research Staff Consultative Group Working Group is to oversee the commissioning, quality and effectiveness of the training and career development interventions provided in fulfilment of the Research Staff Development Strategy.

Specifically, the Group is charged to:

1. Ensure that the Research Staff Development Programme (RSDP) includes learning materials sufficient and appropriate to meet the requirements of the Research Staff Development Strategy and also each domain and sub-domain of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF);

2. Commission the annual RSDP, ensuring that this is done in a compliant and cost-effective manner, that it takes into account the available evaluation data and that the ensuing learning materials adopt a range of media including class-room-based, small group/one-to-one and electronic approaches;

3. Ensure that all commissioned materials are founded on an evidence-based approach, current thinking and best practice in the area;

4. Work with the UCL Research Networks to build local best practices into the RSDP and to minimise the risk of duplication of materials or gaps in our provision;

5. Research the changing training and career development needs of the researcher community, as required;

6. Promote an integrated, easy-to-access, approach to all researcher development activity, irrespective of source.

Membership

The Working Group will have the following membership:

Office of the Vice-Provost (Research):	Ben Colvill
HR Organisational Development:	Richard Laughlin
	Rochelle Rowe
Institute of Education:	Richard Freeman
Research Networks:	2-3 Representatives
UCL Careers:	Calum Leckie (or representative)
UCL Arena:	Sam Smidt (or representative)

The membership will be reviewed in Term 1 annually.

Secretariat and Reporting Line

The Secretary will be provided by HR Organisational Development, as required.

The Working Group will report into the Research Staff Consultative Group.