**UCL IoO**

**PhD Buddy Scheme**

Guidance Booklet

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# Introduction

Starting your PhD can be a daunting and exciting process, stepping into a world of new opportunities and, ultimately, a lot of work. To support you in this transition UCL Institute of Ophthalmology (IoO) have introduced a Buddy Scheme, where you will be paired up with a Year 2+ PhD student independent from your research group.

Initially your buddy will simply be a point of contact, there to help you settle into the social aspects of life at the Institute. They will introduce you to other students and staff, helping and encouraging you to become part of the IoO community.

To make the most of a buddy, students should adopt a proactive approach, focussing on:

1. Identifying the skills, knowledge and/or goals they want to achieve/gain.
2. Discussing how to build on strengths and address weaknesses.
3. Actively engaging with each other to identify learning activities and locating resources and people that might be of help.
4. Agreeing mutually convenient times and frequency of meetings, as well as communication methods.
5. Regularly reviewing how well the relationship is going.
6. Contacting a Project Co-ordinator regarding any concerns about your buddy or the scheme.
7. Discussing what arrangements for on-going communication would be acceptable to the buddy beyond the official end of the project.

# Buddying Code of Conduct

It might be that you would like a more formal arrangement with your buddy continuing through for the whole of your first year with additional support around doing your PhD (e.g. finding a way to learn that new technique that you require but seemingly no one knows how to do). If this is the case, we advise following this Code of Conduct:

1. The buddy’s primary role is to informally assist the student in settling into life at the Institute.
2. Buddy partners recognise the need for respect for confidentiality.
3. Organise catch up sessions suitable for both of you. Modes of communication and frequency to be arranged between you at the start of the scheme.
4. The role of the buddy is not to be a counsellor. There may be some instances where the buddy doesn’t feel comfortable with dealing with the situation. In this case they should refer the student onto the appropriate person.
5. Buddy and student relationship should be reviewed at 4 and 10 months, to ensure it is going as you both wish it to be.
6. Buddies and students should contact the Project Co-ordinator if they encounter a problem with their buddy partner or feel the code is being breached or is likely to be compromised.

# Referral Cheat Sheet

There may be times when a student needs more support than buddies are able to give, for example if a student may be affected by mental health issues, or where there is already a channel of advice and support that should be used.

Below is a table of common issues that buddies are not expected to handle and should instead refer on:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Issue: | Person to contact: |
| Difficulties with student/supervisor relationship | **Departmental Graduate Tutors**Virginia Calder v.calder@ucl.ac.uk Jacqui van de Spuyj.spuy@ucl.ac.uk Karl Matterk.matter@ucl.ac.uk  |
| Problems understanding work | **Supervisor/ Secondary Supervisor** |
| PhD specific processes/stipends, etc. | **Education Office**Hazel Croft (Research Degrees Manager)ioo.pgr@ucl.ac.uk Alex Addo (Education Manager)ioo.education@ucl.ac.uk  |
| Bullying, harassment and/or discrimination | **Departmental Graduate Tutors**To report bullying, harassment or discrimination anonymously, please contact [Report + Support](https://report-support.ucl.ac.uk/)  |
| Mental health support | **Mental Health First Aiders**Diana Sefic-Svaradiana.sefic-svara@ucl.ac.uk Jill Cowingj.cowing@ucl.ac.uk Olive Byrneo.byrne@ucl.ac.uk  |

Please also note the following UCL services are available to assist students:

* UCL Doctoral School:

<http://www.grad.ucl.ac.uk/>

* You can raise general queries, such as about visa and immigration issues, via the Ask UCL Services:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/askucl>

* UCL Students Support & Wellbeing

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/support-and-wellbeing-0>

* Students’ Union UCL

<http://studentsunionucl.org/>

We hope that you find having a buddy useful and that this helps you to settle in here. We also ask that Year1 students pay forward this support to the new cohort when they move into Year2.

If, for any reason, you feel the relationship is not working with your buddy, please get in touch with a Project Co-ordinator.