



## A word from our new Head of Division Professor Peter Fonagy to all PALS Alumni

It's a fantastic honour to be the new Head of Psychology and Language Sciences. I want to acknowledge and **thank** [Professor David Shanks](#) for the tremendous contribution he has made as Founding Head of one of the outstanding Divisions of this distinguished University. Most probably I



was not personally involved in your education, but as someone who has been at UCL for nearly 40 years it is not unlikely that we crossed paths (or shared a lift) at some point during your time in Bloomsbury. So: **'Hello again'!**

As a specialist focusing on child clinical psychology, for far too long I have been drawn away from the richness and breadth of my native discipline. In my new role it is exhilarating, and a

challenge and a privilege, to engage afresh with the ever-developing complexities of language, cognition and brain sciences. And where better to go back to school and learn about these than in one of the best psychology departments in the world. [The Times Higher Education worldwide rankings](#) of universities produced a global ranking for psychology in November 2017. You will be delighted to hear (and you can tell your friends) that Psychology at UCL was ranked by the thousands of international expert ratings that make up the ranking as the second worldwide, ceding only to Stanford. And I would argue (admittedly perhaps not unprejudicially) that Stanford's superiority is only illusory. The rankings are based on research, international outlook, teaching and industrial connections; of course in this last category Stanford has the advantage of being close to Palo Alto, Google and other small companies like Facebook.

On the all-important ranking of teaching, **UCL Psychology is number 1 in the world!** And this is the reason why we also have the best students in the world.

Of course you always knew this if you were here three years as an undergraduate or one or two years as a Masters student. Regardless of what you think of rankings, what this should I hope remind you of is the **amazing academics** who taught you and the superb professional support you benefitted from on the Bloomsbury campus.

Indeed, many of **our teaching programmes are highly innovative** but it is our research that gives them the special energy or zest which takes learning to the next stage. Our [Linguistics BSc](#) and Master's programmes are unique, as is [UCLIC's MSc in Human-Computer Interaction](#). Our professional training programmes have put us in an exceptional position to drive changes in practice throughout the UK and internationally in Speech and Lang Therapy, in Educational as well as Clinical Psychology. Our portfolio of [Masters programmes](#) is second to none.

Why am I so confident that this is the case? Because we have always integrated teaching and research, and in the UCL Psychology and Language Science Division we have the **highest quality research faculty** by far. The most rigorous evaluation of UK academic departments, the last [Research Excellence Framework \(REF 2014\)](#), found UCL to be the top-ranked university for Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience research. Learning at the same time as discovering, being there as material for the next generation of textbooks is gathered, is the student experience that UCL P&LS offers and we are proud to deliver year after year.

Of course we cannot do this without your support – but we are not asking for money. What I am hoping is that you might sing our praises; that you could tell others what a special place UCL is for the subjects we teach. And it is not just about the science. We are not only the **greenest department** at UCL, but we are also the one with a **nationally recognized professional support** staff, the one which **cares more about its students** than most others, and as part of this we want to maintain links with our students after they have move into the world outside UCL.

As many of you are overseas, you might be concerned that with Brexit and the nationalism that is emerging in many countries we will value our global connections less. More than anything else, what makes me feel most proud about being a UCL alumnus is its **international outlook** – we have always been just as concerned about what happens around the world as what happens in our backyard. It is obvious now that it is more important than ever for us to keep our global, outward-looking approach fresh and alive, and in this you as alumni can play a major role. We want you to keep writing and let us know how you are doing and what's happening to you wherever you are.

UCL is global. The global language of our science will always keep us connected. But what makes human connections real is the sharing of personal information. So do **keep in touch** and let us know what you are doing and how you are building on the foundation which your UCL degree provided. We want to hear. And we promise to share the most inspiring experiences on these pages.



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