



UCL

17 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

[see also Minute 18 below]

17A Amendment of the offer letter for PGR students

[RDC Min.3A, 16.10.13]

Reported:

17A.1 Although SRS colleagues had previously contacted the DTCs concerned to ascertain what the requirements were for the single offer letter covering both the MRes and PhD awards, there had been a lack of consensus as to whether or not the letter should be a combined MRes/MPhil/PhD offer. The Director of Student Administration would be meeting with the FGT for Engineering Sciences, however, before the end of the month with a view to agreeing a consistent position among DTCs that would offer a way forward.

17B Progression level from MRES to PhD 1+3 programmes

[RDC Min 4, 16.10.13]

Noted:

17B.1 At the previous meeting of RDC on 16 October 2013, RDC had proposed the following:

- That the criteria for automatic progression for MRes/PhD/EngD 1+3 programmes of study be changed to require attainment of an overall average of 50% *in addition to* an average of 60% on the main dissertation/research project component of the MRes;
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be geared towards building on excellence at UCL in teaching, supervision, education leadership, it would be centred on UCL's commitment to research-based education and encompass wider dimensions of academic practice, including research-related

offer guidance to colleagues who were unsure about which strand of the scheme would be appropriate for them.

- 18.12 Members of RDC noted that the survey at RDC 2-3 (13-14) offered a useful snapshot of PGR student teaching activity within SLMS. It was agreed that subject to amendment of the some of the questions (viz. amendment of the first question to read "What percentage of PhD students in your Department teach?" and amendment of the fourth question to read "Is it part of their PhD studentship?") it would be worthwhile circulating the survey with a view to eliciting responses from other UCL schools/faculties also.
- 18.13 Some members of RDC drew attention to the fact that a number of departments had indicated at RDC 2-3 (13-14) that they did not pay their PhD students to teach. RDC agreed that this was not acceptable and that it would be timely to remind UCL departments of the relevant guidance on the HR web pages (see http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/guidance_to_teaching.php) that had been previously issued by the Graduate School and agreed by the Provost's SMT and by AC.

RESOLVED:

- 18.14 That subject to the amendments proposed in Minute 18.8 above, FGTs be asked to distribute the survey questions set out at RDC 2-3 (13-14) to all departments within their faculties, for completion and return to them.

ACTION: Faculty Graduate Tutors

- 18.15 That FGTs be asked to take action to remind departments of the relevant guidance on the HR web pages at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/guidance_to_teaching.php on providing teaching opportunities for PGR students and early-career research staff. *[Secretary's note: this guidance is in the process of being reviewed and updated and will be available shortly]*

ACTION: Faculty Graduate Tutors

19 STUDENT BAROMETER AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT BAROMETER DATA FINDINGS

Received:

- 19.1 A presentation on the data findings of the ISBSB in relation to PGR students, introduced by Ms Lydia Harwood of the UCL International Office.

Reported:

- 19.2 The PGR student response rate for the Autumn 2013 ISBSB had been 29% (cf an overall student response rate of 26%). An online version of the findings of the ISBSB would shortly be made available to UCL faculties so that they would be able to consider the information for individual departments and programmes.
- 19.3 While overall the ISBSB had portrayed UCL PGR students' experiences in a positive light, some areas had been highlighted as presenting lower levels of PGR student satisfaction relative to the institutional averages and/or averages of Russell Group and other surveyed institutions. These areas included: accommodation and accommodation costs; living costs; opportunities to teach; course organisation; quality lectures; sports facilities; social facilities; faith provision; careers support; student advisory.
- 19.4 The following main conclusions were offered by the presentation:

- 20.10 That the note at RDC 2-5 (13-14) be received and discussed by FTCs and FGTCs (or their equivalents) with a view to reporting views and comments back to the next scheduled meeting of RDC.

ACTION: Faculty Graduate Tutors

- 20.11 That details of the study aimed at determining whether there was any correlation between the amount of teaching being undertaken by PGTA and PhD submission rates that would shortly be carried out in the faculties of Arts and Humanities and SHS be received by RDC in due course.

ACTION: Professor Claire Warwick (to make available to Gary Hawes)

21 APPLICATIONS, OFFERS OF ADMISSION AND ACCEPTANCES TO PGR AND MRES PROGRAMMES

Received:

- 21.1 At RDC 2-6 (13-14), a report on student applications, offers of admission and applicant acceptances to PGR and MRes programmes of study.

Reported:

- 21.2 Overall, UK/EU applications for research programmes were up by 2.9% on the previous year's figures, and overseas applications had increased by 27.8%. While a significant amount of the increase was owing to the Faculty of Engineering Sciences, it was not yet possible to determine whether this increase would be sustained or whether it was a reflection of applications not being in the main admissions database in 2013 until later in the cycle.

- 21.3 There had been an appreciable increase in the number of offers being produced in both the UK/EU and overseas categories relative to the previous year (38.9% and 23.5% respectively), and the number of acceptances was also currently higher than at the same point for the previous year (20.5% and 31.78%v respectively). However, as it was still early in the admissions cycle, little could be read into acceptance figures at this stage.

- 21.4 There had been a 21.8% increase in MRes applications for 2013/14 compared with es applications 9

Reported:

- 23.2 RDC had at its previous meeting on 16 October 2014 asked the Student Records Manager to explore the possibility of providing electronic copies of theses to examiners. In reporting back to RDC, the Student Records Manager drew attention to the following:
- A check of webpages for other Russell Group universities had confirmed that none as yet required students to submit electronic theses as part of the original submission.
 - Potential difficulties in effecting this arrangement included:
 - the need to ensure an electronic thesis was identical to the bound copy;
 - problems with the size of a file if sent by email;
 - the need to ensure that the file sent to examiners could not be amended, or that any annotations could be clearly identified.
 - An ideal solution for the future would be for theses to be deposited in some form of on-line repository that could be accessed by examiners. The Research Publication Service used by Library Services for the final copies of theses provides a model for this.
- 23.3 In light of the above, the Student Records Manager's proposal was that UCL's Regulations should continue to require the submission of two bound copies of a thesis, but that the provision of electronic copies of theses to examiners could be arranged if requested under certain, pre-defined circumstances.
- 23.4 The Chair of RDC reported that in response to an enquiry from the RDC officers around the feasibility of adapting the UCL RPS to make PhD theses available electronically to examiners, the UCL Discovery Manager had written to highlight various benefits and issues that would need to be further considered.

Discussion:

- 23.5 RDC agreed that until there was agreement over what pre-defined circumstances should govern the electronic provision of PhD theses, the Student Records Manager should continue to deal with requests for supply of electronic copies of PhD theses as and when these were received. It was further agreed that it would be important for staff and students receiving enquiries and/or requests regarding the electronic supply of PhD theses to ensure that these were referred to and handled by the Students Records Manager.
- 23.6 It was agreed in order to give an indication of the current level of demand for the supply of electronic copies of PhD theses, the Student Records Manager should be asked to report back to the next meeting of RDC on the number of requests for supply of electronic copy of PhD theses that she had received from examiners. RDC agreed that in the meantime, encourage the Library to build this into their future plans.

RESOLVED:

- 23.7 That for the time being and until guidance on determining what the criteria were for the electronic provision of PhD theses to examiners was produced by the Student Records Manager, the Student Records Manager should continue to deal with requests for supply of electronic copies of PhD theses as and when these were received.

ACTION: Helen Notter

- 23.8 That in order to give an indication of the current level of demand for the supply of electronic copies of PhD theses, the Student Records Manager be asked to report back to the next meeting of RDC on the number of requests for supply of electronic copy of PhD theses that she had received from examiners since the March 2014 meeting of RDC.

ACTION: Helen Notter

- 23.9 That the RDC officers respond to the UCL Discovery Manager to inform her of RDC's discussions and to encourage UCL Library Services to consider extending the RPS to cover the electronic provision of PhD theses to examiners as part of its future plans for development of the service.

ACTION: Gary Hawes

Noted:

- 25.2 The full version of the Graduate School Annual Report is available at <http://www.grad.ucl.ac.uk/annual-report/> and will be filed with the Minutes of this meeting (as RDC 2-10 (13-14) * Annexes 1-8).

Reported:

- 25.3 The Chair of RDC drew attention to the following areas that had been highlighted in the Graduate School Annual Report:

- Uptake of the Skills Development Programme delivered by the Graduate School continued to be strong –10,989 registrations were taken over 700 skills courses in 2012-13
- Research student uptake of the Research Student Log was 95%.
- Now in its eighth year, the Graduate School-led Bloomsbury Postgraduate Skills Network continued to be a successful way of sharing training opportunities in the local area. Membership had been widened in 2013 to include King's College.
- The Graduate School had convened a new Researcher Development Working Group to consider how to translate UCL's strategic ambitions for early career researchers into a consistent framework for researcher development, identifying priorities for change and improvement within existing activities, practice and policies.
- A new and much improved Graduate School website had been created and G0 13u98.0003b.76
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