

CONFIRMED

## **2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

2.1 **Agreed** – the minutes of the meeting held 17 June 2015 [*RDC Mins.32-42, 17.06.15*].

## **3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES** [*see also Minutes 4, 7, 9 and 13 below*]

### **3A Update on the PGR Student Payment Process** [*Minute 24 (14-15) refers*]

3A.1 **Received** – a paper on the bid to upgrade the research student payment review at RDC 01-02 (15-16).

3A.2 The majority of requests to make improvements in Portico had not been awarded funding by the Administrative Information Services Group (AISG), including RDC's requested improvements to the PGR student payment process. The UCLU representative confirmed that delays in processing payments were causing significant student dissatisfaction. The committee noted that the research strand of AISG might provide an alternative route through which to pursue the issue.

### **RESOLVED:**

3A.3 A small group, including the Head of the Doctoral School, the UCLU PGR representative, and the Director of Student Administration, would meet to discuss the available options around the research student payment review



CALT, IOE and the Doctoral School under the UCL Arena scheme, to enhance the support currently on offer and make the programme more flexible, and to supplement training with online support materials. There were also plans for twice-yearly supervisor forum events, and plans to improve communications with FGTs and DGTs.

- 6.3 **Approved** - RDC warmly welcomed and approved the proposals and asked committee members to get involved, for example by helping to identify experienced supervisors who could help to run sessions, or by recommending key themes/ speakers for the biannual seminars. It was suggested that departmental and faculty administrators could also help with communications.
- 6.4 The committee noted that training for new supervisors would still be mandatory. CALT indicated that it should be possible to increase the frequency of the induction sessions.

**RESOLVED:**

- 6.5 CALT would work up more detailed plans for the development of Doctoral supervision, in conjunction with the Doctoral School.

**Action: CALT**

**7 DOCTORAL STRATEGY** [*Minute 36 (14-15) refers*]

- 7.1 **Received** – the final draft of the UCL Doctoral Strategy at RDC 01-08 (15-16).
- 7.2 The strategy had been well-received by the Provost and by Academic Board at its recent meeting. The paper had also been received by Academic Committee, which had been particularly interested to hear about the new Impact Statement which would be introduced as a requirement for all theses.
- 7.3 RDC noted that it might also be beneficial to reference the cross-institutional Connected Curriculum, Arena and Changemakers initiatives as they provided opportunities to involve PGR students. The Head of the Doctoral School agreed to speak to CALT about how this could be incorporated. RDC also noted that a working group had been set up to investigate PGR student wellbeing and, in particular, how UCL could promote mental wellbeing.

**RESOLVED:**

- 7.4 The final document would be completed and disseminated online internally and externally. Faculty graduate committees were also asked to add the strategy to their agendas.

**Action: Doctoral School, Chairs of Faculty Graduate Committees**

**8 POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PRES) 2015 REPORT**

- 8.1 **Received** – a paper on the results of the PRES 2015 at RDC 01-09 (15-16).
- 8.2 UCL had seen a response rate of 36% compared to a sector average of 40% and a Russell Group average of 41%. However, this was considered a good result for a first attempt at a survey, and compared well with previous in-house surveys. RDC agreed that UCL should aim to be in the upper quartile across all themes.
- 8.3 Areas identified for development included teaching, progression and supervision. In particular, UCL lagged behind competitors in providing opportunities for teaching and development. However, the sector had raised concerns about PGAs undertaking too much teaching, impacting on their own learning and leading to complaints from undergraduates. Nonetheless, UCL could explore how to offer more teaching opportunities as appropriate.
- 8.4 RDC noted that the Doctoral School had worked with the Russell Group to lobby for improvements to the PRES questions, and the HEA had asked for feedback about the revised survey. The Student Survey Working Group had also been exploring UCL's engagement with student surveys, considering how they were presented to students and how UCL used the feedback received. It was suggested that the results could be introduced into supervisor training to raise awareness of key areas for development.

**RESOLVED:**

- 8.5 FGTs were asked to take the PRES data back to Faculty graduate committees for discussion, noting that the Doctoral School would shortly be providing bespoke Faculty reports to assist them in their planning. Each Faculty was asked to report to the next RDC meeting on three key areas of work which they would be undertaking in response to the survey, for further discussion by the committee.

**Action: Faculty Graduate Tutors**

- 8.6 The PRES results would be included in the biannual supervisors' newsletter.

**Action: Director of CALT**

**9 UPDATE ON UCL AUSTRALIA** [*Minute 37.7 (14-15) refers*]

- 9.1 **Received** – a paper on progress in the run-out at RDC 01-10 (15-16).
- 9.2 Engineering Sciences provided its regular update on the transformation of UCL's stand-alone presence in Australia. Four PGR students were due to finish after the end of 2017 and the paper outlined the particular issues pertinent to each. Although UCL did not yet know each supervisor's plans post-2017 - which would have a significant impact on each student's decision - communication lines were open and there was a high level of support in place. However the situation was being monitored carefully, particularly in relation to the two students who would not reach CRS before 2017 - the Faculty was aware that any interruption or resubmission could be complex to manage. RDC also asked the Faculty to consider how the student experience would be maintained if no new research students were to be recruited at UCL Australia.

**RESOLVED:**

- 9.3 The UCLU representative was keen to ensure that all UCL Australia students were aware of the support available from the Union. The FGT for Engineering Sciences agreed to email the UCL Australia PGR students, putting them in touch with the PGR representative and highlighting the communication channels that were available.

**Action: Faculty Graduate Tutor Engineering Sciences,  
UCLU PGR representative**

**10 PROPOSAL FOR PRACTICE-RELATED PHD**

- 10.1 **Received** – a proposal for the development of a generic practice-related PhD at RDC 01-11 pr



**RESOLVED:**

- 11.5 The committee concluded that reservations about the proposals were sufficiently strong to not recommend any immediate change, but acknowledged the need to further consider what was reasonable and appropriate. RDC agreed to establish a small working group to look at the working week and what policies and guidance could be put in place. It was confirmed that all PGTAs should be paid for preparation time and assessment, not just contact hours, and Faculties were asked to ensure that the current policy was being followed until a decision could be reached.

**Action: Chair, Faculty Graduate Tutors**

**12 PGR ENGAGEMENT MONITORING REGULATIONS**

- 12.1 Received –

**16 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE MINUTES OF FACULTY GRADUATE TEACHING COMMITTEES**

- 16.1 **Received** – a summary of Faculty Graduate Teaching Committee minutes from 2014-15 at RDC 01-17 (15-16).
- 16.2 RDC discussed the process of reviewing Faculty Graduate Teaching Committee minutes each year and agreed that this was a useful way to gain an oversight of discussions and developments. It also helped to reveal the extent of discussion over particular issues. The committee noted that the different faculty arrangements had led to a significant variance in the amount of PGR business considered by each committee. It was agreed that, where PGR matters were considered as part of a joint committee also covering taught programmes, FGTs should try to promote the inclusion of PGR matters on agendas.
- 16.3 There were some very good examples of committees highlighting feedback from students in their agendas. FGTs were asked to consider how their own committee might encourage attendance by PGR student representatives and ensure that student issues were at the forefront of agendas.
- 16.4 Some minutes had not been available at the time of writing the report and would need to be chased up after RDC. FGTs were reminded that faculties were required to post minutes online for students to access in a timely manner, and to respond to the regular requests from Academic Services to supply minutes. This would allow time for the report to be developed in collaboration with the faculties, and for factual accuracy etc. to be checked.

**RESOLVED:**

- 16.5 RDC agreed to add a reminder to the June meeting's agenda.

**Action: Secretary**

**PART III:**