

Faculty Representatives Termly Report

2017-18

Your Names: Judith Pape & Roxanna Zakeri

Your Faculty & Roles: Medical Sciences Postgraduate Research

Faculty Priorities:

We believe the most pressing student needs in the faculty are:

- Training for teaching and supervision
- Feeling valued as a research member
- Awareness of codes of conducts and UCL legislations.

These conclusions have arisen mainly from the results of the PRES but also through conversation with students and at SSCC meetings.

The results of the PRES were discussed in the most recent Faculty Research Degree Committee meeting in November. We notified the committee of further feedback we obtained from PhD students stating they want more guidance on how to supervise BSc and MSc students for their projects (lab and bench).

Another ongoing priority and issue is also the late payment of PhD stipends, which is something we want to take forward this year. We also want to address the proper induction of PhD students who start at different times during the academic year, as this has been identified as an area that could significantly improve the PGR student experience.

Meetings in the Faculty:

Additionally, to the Faculty Research Degree Committee as discussed above, Roxanna and I have met with Jill Norman to discuss the ongoing issues, especially the unpaid PGTA activities. Jill was very supportive in us enforcing a culture change in the faculty towards PhD students and other priorities that I have mentioned above.

We have both been attending SSCC meetings within our respective Divisions (Judith - Division of Surgery and Interventional Sciences, Roxanna - Division of Medicine) and been able to raise the Faculty PGR student priorities as above.

We also attended a course run by ARENA called "Postgraduate Students Who Supervise", which was extremely helpful in answering questions about PGTA roles and contracts.

Meetings with the Union:

This week (Jan 2018) we have raised the unpaid PGTA issue with Tom and he has suggested a meeting with him and Mark (Postgraduate Students Officer) in order to seek advice and discuss possible actions.

Other comments:

We are hoping to send out a newsletter (with the help of Sandy Kutty) by next week to introduce ourselves to postgraduate research students of the faculty and distribute a survey we designed to collect data on stipend payments and PGTA teaching. We want to present the data obtained at the next Faculty Research Degree Committee in February. We also wanted to note here that we have discussed with Jill and other faculty members that some senior academics present with a very negative attitude at SSCC and faculty meetings. This appears to be especially toward research students and has involved PGR reps being shouted at and outnumbered by staff members of the committee who disagree with the issues they raise. Some PI's appear to feel personally attacked by collective issues or complaints that academic reps are raising as a voice for the students. We think it would be great if it could be reiterated to UCL staff that these SSCC (and faculty) meetings are for the benefit of both students and staff to communicate better and strive for a more positive experience for everyone.