

# Faculty Representatives Termly Report

2017-18 (Termly Report 2)

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**Your Name: Roxanna Zakeri & Judith Pape**

**Your Faculty & Role: Medical Sciences, Postgraduate Research**

## Faculty Priorities:

We believe the most pressing student needs in the Faculty currently are:

- Ensuring recognition and financial remuneration for PGR student roles as supervisors of UG and PGT students
- Investigation of stipend payment processes as students continue to report late payments and are enduring financial difficulties as a result
- Induction for PGR students who start at different times during the year still needs to be optimised. This is one aspect of the overall need to improve the PGR student experience as a whole, such as reducing isolation, increasing opportunities for interdepartmental networking and socialising, and encouraging access to professional development opportunities

These conclusions have been drawn from a survey we conducted of PGR students in the Faculty (and some external Faculties) and through conversation with students and at SSCC meetings. We also liaised with the UCLU Postgraduate Students' Officer to address these issues and discuss incorporating our Faculty issue with PGTA contracts into the wider UCLU campaign.

## Meetings in the Faculty:

We attended the second term Faculty Research Degree Committee meeting and presented the preliminary results for our PGR student survey. Positive outcomes include:

- Faculty acknowledged concerns we raised that students want more guidance on supervising UG/PGT students. We discussed the ARENA course we attended, "Postgraduate Students Who Supervise", and felt that this was a very useful. Faculty has liaised with ARENA as a result and plan to run more sessions. All PIs were also notified to encourage their students to attend this course (emails were sent in Division of Medicine to all PIs).
- Faculty acknowledged the survey we conducted regarding late stipend payments and unpaid PGTA work and have now started to speak to department heads in order to start the process of standardising PGTA work and investigating what contracts are already in place in the different departments.
- We are meeting with the Faculty Graduate Tutor, Jill Norman, to design a suitable peer mentoring scheme for PGR students. Similar schemes exist in

the Faculty of Population Health Sciences and we wish to adopt this for Medical Sciences as part of our campaign to improve student experience and induction.

- Inductions were discussed, especially for PhD students that start half way through the years and the idea is now to have an induction pack that would contain tailored information.
- Furthermore, we discussed more student events and how the attendance by students could be improved

### **Meetings with the Union:**

We organised a meeting with the postgraduate student officer, Mark, in order to discuss the issue of PhD students being used as unpaid PGAs, especially for student supervision of research projects as part of their BSc and MSc courses. Mark discussed that the union has been campaigning this cause for years, which was extremely helpful as a lot of information had already been collected. Mark helped us gathering some important documents and information that we could then present at the Faculty meeting, together with the survey results.

### **Other comments:**

**Please include any other thoughts or anything else you'd like to tell students about here.**

With the help of Sandy Kutty we wrote and distributed a PGR Rep newsletter, through which we advertised our survey. Given the quick response to the survey link, this was clearly widely read and we hope to develop this further. We are agreed with the Faculty RDC that we would include dates for relevant cross-Faculty/Department events to help boost student networking and engagement with UCL activities. We also want to organise an evening seminar/social event to improve student experience and opportunities to network with other groups to build collaborations. This was also due to the fact that the drinks gathering we organised after the Dean's Prize Event was extremely well received by PhD students within the Faculty.