



Key to abbreviations

AC	Academic Committee
CRS	Completing research status
DGT	Departmental Graduate Tutor
ELE	E-learning Environments
FGTC	Faculty Graduate Teaching Committee
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IQR	Internal Quality Review
NSV	No significant value
PGA	Postgraduate Association
PGR	Postgraduate research
RAS	Registry and Academic Services
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
UKBA	UK Border Agency

1 ~~CONSTITUTION~~ CONSTITUTION AND 2012-13 MEMBERSHIP; TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 1.1 The constitution and 2012-13 membership and terms of reference of RDC at RDC 1-
01 (12-13).

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 11 JUNE 2012

Confirmed:

- 2.1 The Minutes of the meeting of RDC held on 11 June 2012, issued previously [*RDC Mins.31-43, 11.6.12*].

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3A Turnitin for doctoral theses [RDC Min.34, 11.6.12]

Noted:

- 3A.1 The RDC officers were currently liaising with ELE colleagues over the packaging of best-practice guidance for UCL research students and staff on use of the Turnitin software, which would broadly advocate use of the software as a formative tool for the submission of student reports to their supervisors and as a means of checking non-results sections of student doctoral theses.
- 3A.2 With regard to clarification of the various student copyright and intellectual property

Barometer surveys. For both of these surveys, there had been an overall response rate for PGR students of between 12-14%.

4.4 Key findings from the Student Barometer survey in relation to PGR students were as follows:

- For the Summer 2012 survey, 86% of PGR students had indicated that they would recommend studying at UCL to other people (cf. 84% for the Summer 2011 survey and 82% for the UCL average);
- Overall PGR student satisfaction had remained the same year-on-year, at 90% (cf. 87% for the UCL average and 88% for the UK PGR average).

4.5 In terms of areas of notable improvement on the previous year's survey findings, the level of PGR student satisfaction with laboratories and learning spaces had increased by 5% on the previous year's totals (from 84% to 89% and from 82% to 87% respectively).

4.6 Ms Harwood would provide an electronic copy of the findings of the survey in relation to PGR students to the RDC Secretary for circulation to RDC members. A full statistical analysis of the 2012 Student Barometer survey findings would be undertaken in due course. In the meantime, further breakdowns of the survey findings in relation to PGR students would be made available, including a split of the findings for PGR international and domestic students, as well as breakdowns by type of study (*ie* FT/PT), year of study, age and gender.

Discussion:

4.7 With reference to the issue of PGR student isolation from the university community, some members of RDC noted that this could be applied to PGR students who felt that they were lacking the opportunities to link with academic and research staff within their own departments, as well as to those PGR students who felt isolated from the wider UCL community. Although the UCL Union had been active in trying to raise awareness of the activities of its Postgraduate Association, some RDC members noted that the fact that PGR students could be admitted at different times of the year meant that they sometimes did not receive information about activities and services at the beginning of their studies in the same systematic way as undergraduate students.

4.8 The fact that only 74% of PGR student respondents had indicated satisfaction with the level of careers advice available to them was probably a reflection of the variability in the level of careers advice available to PGR students locally across the institution – particularly since, the level of satisfaction with the UCL Careers Service had increased by 7% to 87% relative to the 2011 survey response.

4.9 Disability support issues could be more acute for PGR students, particularly in instances where they had specific access needs, and it was incumbent on UCL to publicise information on disability support services that were available to PGR students throughout the course of their PhD studies.

4.10 Demand among PGR students for more opportunities to teach was regularly flagged as an issue during IQRs of UCL departments and academic units. However, it was recognised that there was sometimes a tension for departments between identifying opportunities for PGR students to teach and meeting the expectations of undergraduate students (particularly those from overseas) to be taught by academic staff. Since evidence pointed to an inconsistent picture across UCL in terms of the provision of teaching opportunities for PGR students, a more selective and comprehensive examination of this issue needed to be undertaken. It would also be necessary to take account of the level and scope of teaching training that was

currently available within UCL to PGR students who wanted to teach. In this regard, it would be helpful to solicit information from CALT on its future plans for teacher training for PGR students. However, some RDC members noted that in many instances, UCL departments would need to seek to manage the expectations of PGR students with regard to the opportunities for teaching that would be available to them.

- 4.11 It was agreed that the RDC Secretary would circulate the Student Barometer survey findings in relation to PGR students electronically to RDC members with a view to these being referred to and discussed in relevant Faculty-level committees.

RESOLVED:

- 4.12 That the Student Barometer survey findings in relation to PGR students be made available electronically to RDC members with a view to these being referred to and discussed in relevant Faculty-level committees.

ACTION: Mr Gary Hawes

- 4.13 That CALT be asked to provide information on its future plans for teacher training for PGR students. em. ACTION: Mr Gary Hawmts. em. J0.001 TTJ0.017 Tc 0.00029Tw 0 -57 T2443(A

the CRS year). However, concerns about the complications of issuing two offer letters concurrently had been raised by (the same) two faculties.

- 5.5 Colleagues in RAS had reported that they had not heard anything further from the UCL faculties concerned following the amendment of the offer letter to PhD students. On the separate issue of PhD programmes that included an integrated MRes, RAS colleagues had advised that discussions would still need to take place regarding this and the possibility included an sti,5

9 INTERNAL QUALITY REVIEW 2010-11

Noted:

- 9.1 At RDC 1-07 (12-13), a summary of recommendations identified in IQR reports in 2010-11 in relation to postgraduate programme provision, introduced by the Chair.

Reported:

- 9.2 Two issues raised in IQR reports during 2010-11 in relation to research degree programme provision and PGR students were:
- The need for departments to ensure that PG students with teaching responsibilities were given access to timely formal training;
 - The need for departments to keep under review procedural documents and practices, eg MPhil to PhD upgrade procedures, PhD supervision arrangements, to ensure that these were kept up to date and in line with UCL Regulations.

10 REPORT ON RESEARCH DEGREE ADMINISTRATION

Noted:

- 10.1 At RDC 1-08 (12-13), the above report, introduced by Ms Helen Notter.

Reported:

- 10.2 Although it had not been possible to provide a report on the number of research degree examiners not submitting the preliminary report on a student's PhD thesis prior to the *viva voce* examination, it was hoped that improvements to the functionality of the Portico system in due course (funding permitting) would enable colleagues to undertake and produce a more detailed data analysis of research degree examination statistics in future.

11 RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12

Approved:

- 11.1 At RDC 1-09 (12-13), the RDC Annual Report 2011-12.

12 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

12A Chair's Action

Noted:

- 12A.1 At RDC 1-10 (12-13), action taken by the Chair of RDC on behalf of RDC since the Committee's previous meeting.

- Working group on non-permissible forms and degrees of assistance for research students
- PhD Marketing and Admissions Working Group

13 HEFCE REPORT ON RATES OF QUALIFICATION FROM POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREES

Noted:

- 13.1 The above HEFCE report published in May 2012, at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2012/201210/>