

# Early-Career Researchers Strategy and Implementation at UCL and Beyond

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**TOWARDS A GLOBAL  
CORE VALUE SYSTEM IN  
DOCTORAL  
EDUCATION**

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# LONDON'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

- More than **6000** Academic and Research staff in 11 Faculties
- **44,000** strong Student Community
- More than **8000** Doctoral candidates
- **140+** Nationalities represented among UCL students



PUSHING  
THE FRONTIERS  
OF INNOVATIVE  
RESEARCH

**LERU members:**

University of Amsterdam  
Universitat de Barcelona  
University of Cambridge  
University of Copenhagen  
Trinity College Dublin  
University of Edinburgh  
University of Freiburg  
Université de Genève  
Universität Heidelberg  
University of Helsinki  
Universiteit Leiden  
KU Leuven  
Imperial College London  
University College London  
Lund University  
University of Milan  
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München  
University of Oxford  
Pierre & Marie Curie University  
Université Paris-Sud  
University of Strasbourg  
Utrecht University  
University of Zurich



# PURPOSE - Training researchers...

Innovators in society

(eg EU aspiration of R&D to be 3% of GDP)

## To create...

- Research and impact
- Innovation and new businesses
- Well researched policy
- Research led and informed curricula

# Researcher Careers

- Research in Higher Education (HE)
- Lecturing, teaching and research in HE
- Teaching outside HE
- Public, Private and Charitable sector research
- Policy and Government (incl. Think Tanks)
- Entrepreneurial
- Managerial
- Professional (Law, Engineering, Medicine, Architecture, University Administration, Charity Management, ...)
- Communication (Media, Publishing, Science Communication,...)
- Consultancy

## Vision

[UCL Home](#) / [UCL Doctoral School](#) / [Doctoral Education Strategy](#) / [Vision](#)

UCL aims to train researchers from diverse backgrounds to be creative, critical, autonomous intellectual risk takers at the frontiers of research.

We aim to produce research leaders, working with integrity and motivated to make a positive impact on society. We prepare them to be able to work across disciplines which is needed to confront society's grand challenges in both academic and non-academic roles.

[Vision](#)

[UCL's unique global profile](#)

[Values](#)

[What are we preparing research students for?](#)

[How will we do this?](#)

[Download 'Doctoral Education Strategy'](#)



# Three Principles – and structures to support these

- Strong and supportive research environment
- Interdisciplinary, intersectoral and international
- Accountable and consistent

Creative, critical, autonomous intellectual risk takers



# Strong and supportive research environment

- A home of one's own
  - Research group, Department, funded Doctoral Training Centres with Doctoral/Graduate School oversight
- Supervisory team and thesis committees
- Cohorts and programmes
- Figures to turn to – the Departmental Graduate Tutor and the doctoral administrator
- Communities – ECR networks, external groups

# Strong and supportive research environment

- A smooth journey:
  - Admissions, induction, team supervision, cohort activities, skills training, monitoring, examination, graduation
- Independence – whose project?
- Regulations and Code of Practice
- Generic skills, generic technical skills, technical skills...
- Mental well being

# Interdisciplinary, International, Intersectoral

**Research training to prepare for global challenges**

- Permissions to supervise across Faculties
- Workshops/seminars and Skills Development as network building
- Communities eg ECR networks, professional networks, collaborative projects
- Study leave and money for travel, conferences etc.
- Internships, broad careers advice, alumni contacts

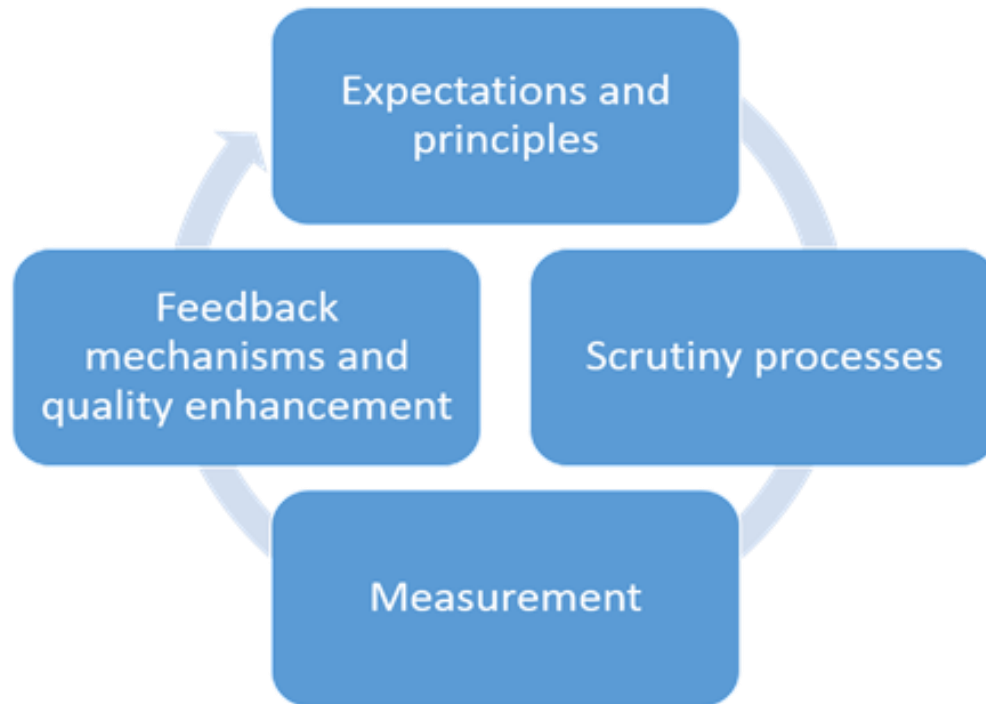
# Career Development



- PhACE – PhD Activating Career Event (Utrecht)
- Preparation for academic practice (Oxford)
- OpenLAB (Strasbourg)
- BioNews Internships – Science reporting for research students (UCL)
- UB Solidarity Foundation (Barcelona)

# Accountability and Consistency

Maintaining a quality culture in doctoral education



# Policies and Regulations

- University Regulations
- National laws (France)
- Policy Frameworks (Heidelberg heiDOCS)
- UCL Code of Practice for Research Degrees  
<https://issuu.com/ucl-docschool/docs/graduate-research-degrees-code-of-practice-2021>
- Learning Agreements (Lund, Utrecht etc.)
- Monitoring systems (e.g. UCL Research Student Log, Oxford Graduate Supervision System)

## Some measurements

- Speed of response to concerns and queries
- Transparency – is information up to date?
- Degree of engagement with stakeholders
- Satisfaction of stakeholders (but part of our job is to enforce and drive change...)
- Efficiency (budget)

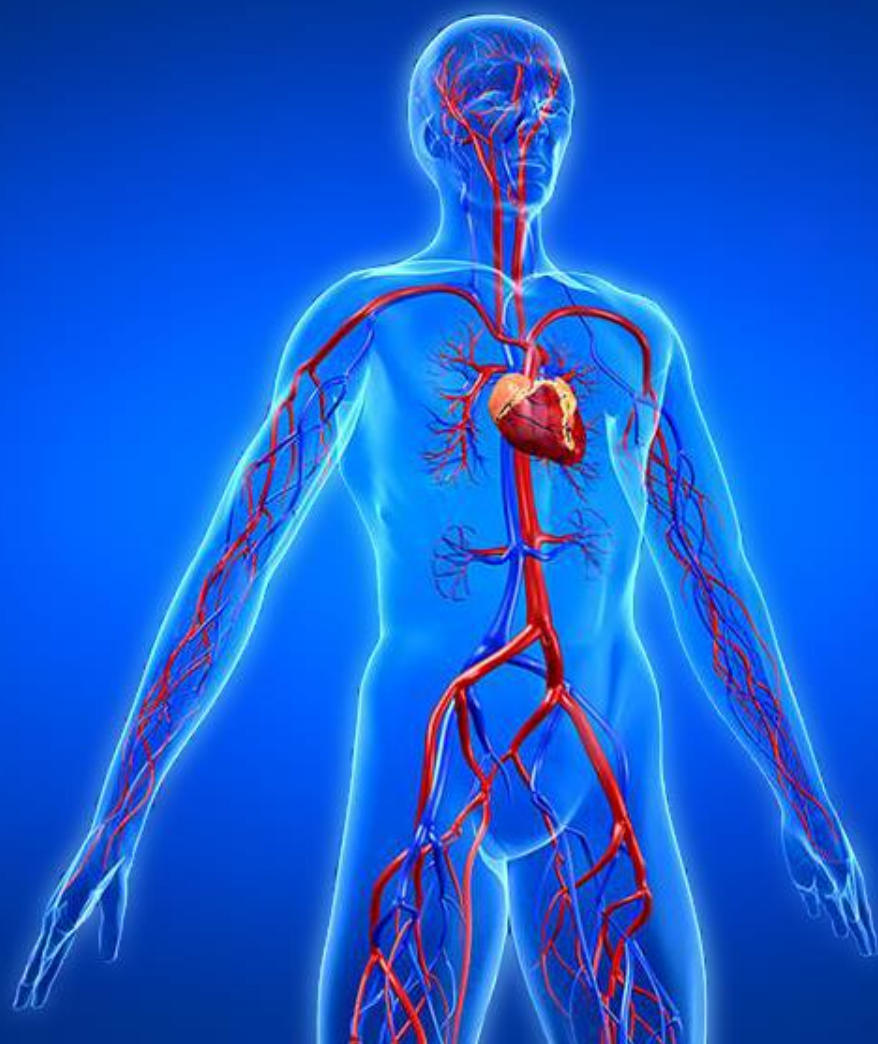


## How do we get ‘compliance’?

- Obedience – ‘Do it!’
  - Shame – ‘Faculty x has much better satisfaction scores’
  - Guilt – ‘Your students are complaining’
  - Envy – ‘Faculty x is doing y and it works’
  - Greed – ‘You would get more/better students if...’
  - Sloth (laziness) – ‘Complaints waste a lot of time’
  - Pride – ‘This is really good practice – can we share it?’,  
‘See how much better this could be done’
- 
- Voice of the candidates is crucial. Also transparency.
  - Emphasise benefits rather than sanctions

# Conclusions

- Remember the purpose
  - Training ‘creative critical autonomous intellectual risk takers’ driving innovation in society (to many roles beyond academia)
- Strong and supportive research environment
- No single way to achieve quality doctoral education
- Measure your effectiveness
  - Qualitative and quantitative



# **UCL Faculties/Departments/Institutes**

**We prepare annual reports with this data and scrutinise and discuss strategic plans**

- Overall numbers, Student:supervisor ratio (around 3:1) – are they meeting their objectives?
- Student record data missing supervisors, research student log usage, supervisors over max supervision load, upgrade and submission rates, formal complaints – are they administering effectively?
- Skills course uptake (local and central) – are they encouraging wider skills?
- Satisfaction survey results – are candidates satisfied?
- Admissions data – are they attractive?
- Equalities and diversity data – are they inclusive?
- Careers destinations – are they serving societal needs?

# Paris Sorbonne

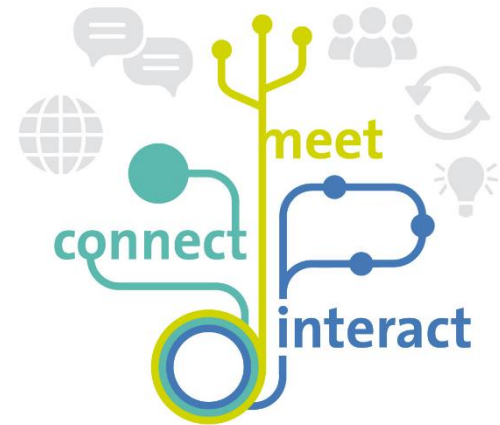
- time to completion
- employment rate of doctoral graduates
- average number of candidates per supervisor
- volumetric indicators e.g. average number of doctorates defended in the last three years and the number of active supervisors
- Employment satisfaction survey of new graduates

# Measure the effectiveness of what?

## What is the purpose

- Institutional performance
- Faculty/Department/Institute performance
- Performance of other professional services delivering activity for doctoral candidates
- Graduate/Doctoral School performance

# Candidate led activities



- Involvement in Governance (Zurich)
- Early scientific independence, group building and co-operative supervision (Heidelberg)
- Training scientists from developing countries (LMU Munich)
- Researcher led initiative fund (Edinburgh)