

University Careers Beyond Research

While you would generally expect to find PhDs in research, a few minutes spent looking at the titles of staff working outside of research-focused departments at UCL will illustrate the variety of roles in which PhDs are employed throughout higher education institutions. A university's primary objective may be the advancement of knowledge but to do this it needs a professional administration team taking responsibility for aspects such as academic planning, media communications, student support and guidance, corporate relationships, commercial ventures, learning support and IT.

Researchers often choose to stay within the academic community but to move on from research. Many find the university environment suits them in a way that the business world might not. As well as being a familiar and comfortable place, you may feel that the university ethos is a better fit to the values that are important to you. There are very good reasons for PhDs to want to stay in universities, and for institutions to want to retain them. Having been a student and researcher for several years you may find the opportunity to provide support to students and academics appealing – an opportunity to contribute to the development of higher education.

PHDS ACROSS UCL

First and foremost, a PhD buys important credibility within a university. This means that you can serve a very useful role as someone able to deal with academics, understanding their approach and thinking, and act as a bridge between them and other support departments.

While your research knowledge skills may not be directly relevant to an administrative or managerial position, the broader skills that research develops will certainly be useful. Having a PhD means you will have the ability to analyse problems and to synthesise a large volume of information. Since research is often a fairly autonomous role you are also likely to be able to work unaided with less management than others.

WHAT DOES THE WORK INVOLVE?

While 'administration' generally encompasses the work of departments outside of research, this title doesn't really do justice to the level of the work involved, the responsibilities it brings, and the involvement in senior management and decision making. As you progress you are likely to contribute increasingly to strategic planning, requiring an in-depth knowledge of the way universities work and the 'business' of higher education. This means understanding the clients that the university serves (students, parents, employers, funders and commercial partners), the ways in which it is funded, and how its resources are managed. The Association of University Administrators publishes a useful online factsheet (www.aua.ac.uk/publications/careersinhe/factsheet.aspx). They also offer a certificate in Higher Education Administration and Management (www.aua.ac.uk/pgcert/). See also the Educational administrator profile (www.prospects.ac.uk/links/EduAdmin).

ASPECTS OF UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

The departments discussed here are based on UCL's structure, but similar units, possibly with different titles, will be found in other higher education institutions.

Academic Services

Academic Services are responsible for administering the College's various committees, including Council and Academic Board, and dealing with governance and constitutional matters. It co-ordinates the Research Assessment Exercise and a report of all research undertaken at the College. It also deals with internal quality management, co-ordinates external quality audits by the QAA and handles senior academic appointments.

Student Welfare

At UCL student welfare is managed by the Dean of Students' Office, which represents students' interests on university committees and co-ordinates all aspects of welfare provision in the College. It is responsible for guiding the development of the various support services such as the Health Service, Residences Office and Counselling Service.

Careers Service

The Careers Service helps undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers and staff to understand and develop their career opportunities. It provides guidance and information services, including one-to-one advice, and a programme of skills workshops and events. In addition it also works with employers wishing to recruit UCL students.

Development and Corporate Communications Office

The role of the Development Office is to develop relationships with UCL's external partners, and is made up of several different units. Alumni Relations seeks to develop relationships with former students and encourage financial giving. The Communications Team's role is to persuade others (including staff, donors and other interest groups) of UCL's mission, while Corporate Events works to bring external audiences into UCL. Income generating schemes are managed by the Major Projects Team, which is currently leading the Campaign for UCL. The management of the College's public profile is the responsibility of the Media Relations Office, which acts as a liaison point between academic researchers and the media. The Research Team exists to provide information to these various campaigns and projects, and the Resources Team provides overall internal support to the department.

Education & Information Support Division

The role of EISD is to provide support to all aspects of learning, research and teaching. It undertakes collaborative projects with UCL departments, works to enhance the use of information technology, and is involved in research projects focused on internal policy and practice. The division includes: the **Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching**, which supports departments in the development of new teaching and learning methods; **Information Systems**, providing IT support and training; **Management Systems**, which develops and maintains financial, human resources, payroll, admissions and student information systems; **Media Resources**, which looks after design, photography and audio-visual needs; and **Web Services** which takes responsibility for UCL's online presence.

Library Services

The libraries manage the many collections and information services, including electronic databases. They provide support to students, academics and other researchers and assistance with training in information retrieval skills.

Estates and Facilities Division

Including **Procurement Services** and the **Safety Office**, Estates have responsibility for developing, maintaining and adapting UCL's physical environment. This includes a range of functions, from managing portering, maintenance and cleaning, to building projects, security and safety.

Finance Division

Finance takes responsibility for managing UCL's accounts and financial systems, plans budgets and projections and monitors departmental resources. It also advises on all applications to Research Councils and other funding trusts.

Human Resources Division

Human Resources looks after the employment of some 8,500 staff at UCL, including recruitment, contracts, salaries, pensions, health and welfare and development. In this capacity it operates the **Staff Development and Training Unit** which works to ensure that staff have an opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge through a range of training workshops.

Registry

The Registry takes care of student affairs – from first recruitment and admission to enrolment, maintenance of student records, student finance, examinations and finally graduation. Registry staff are involved in liaison with schools and colleges, international marketing, recruitment, production of prospectuses and other publications, widening participation and disability support.

Graduate School

The Graduate School supports all postgraduate students in their studies and research. It looks after the research funds and scholarships, and collaborates with other departments to deliver an annual skills development programme.

UCL Business

The Business Team acts as a contact point between the College and external organisations wishing to use UCL's expertise. This involves managing consultancy projects and helping to develop technologies to be licenced for commercial use. It has specific groups focusing on physical science and biomedical research and business, and helps set up spin-off companies through advice on intellectual property rights, licencing and revenue.

PERSPECTIVES OF UCL PHDS WORKING OUTSIDE OF RESEARCH

"My job involves bringing academics and journalists together. It helps to have been both an academic and a journalist, as it means I understand the concerns and needs of each. Contrary to what academics often think, my aim is not to 'spin' their work, but to protect them - and the primary aim is always for their research to be published and promoted in the best possible way. My job allows me to have a broader picture of research, rather than focusing simply on my own field, and because I'm comfortable reading scientific papers I can judge their potential interest to a journalist. There are useful details that as a PhD you're aware of too, but which a journalist wouldn't necessarily know - such as which name on a paper to contact. While I was a researcher I published two papers of my own, so I also know how the publication process works. The British Association runs Media Fellowships which offer placements for scientists

to gain media skills and return with these to academia - this is how I started out."

PhD, Press Office

"I have found being a teaching fellow very rewarding - you do affect students' futures and see them grow and develop. University teaching is unlike any other - you teach smart, motivated adults to think for themselves. You are also operating towards the front of the discipline - in areas that are sometimes new to you, due to the breadth that teaching undergraduates demands. The intellectual challenge of academia remains."

PhD, Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching

"I haven't looked back: I love the academic environment and am lucky that my job involves interaction with a variety of staff at all levels - networking is a big part of my role. I am now responsible for supporting e-learning as well as IT training, and find that my previous experience in an academic role is a great help. I sometimes wonder what life working in the 'real world' would be like, but I hear enough from friends in the private and public sectors to be grateful for the stimulating, supportive, creative environment that UCL provides. Of course there are some major challenges, but I wouldn't want a job that didn't challenge me."

PhD, Information Systems

"Early on in my PhD at King's College London I was invited to undertake some undergraduate tutorials and realised how difficult it is to balance research with teaching and related administrative duties. I moved into academic librarianship and progressed to a management role, having undertaken a professional qualification at UCL. Now I know that academic library management presents its own abiding challenges and headaches, but I am never tempted to work in the private sector. Working in a university where there is always a lively atmosphere and mix of enthusiastic teaching, learning and research, across such a broad spectrum of disciplines, is hugely interesting and rewarding. My PhD allows me to sympathise with and to understand the academic case for ideas, services and new approaches to the support and facilitation of advanced learning and research."

PhD, Library Services

"I know and love the sector and the quest for knowledge and collegial feel which characterise it. It's also meant I've been able to keep a foot in the research door as I'm still occasionally used as a consultant. People in higher education administration are good to work with and in my case I currently work with the most supportive, professional team I've ever seen. I also get much more of an overview of the work that goes on, interact with many more people than I did in research, and there are a wider range of opportunities than within my narrow research field. As an ex-academic/researcher I get satisfaction from knowing both sides of the academic/support boundary and trying to support each in understanding the other!"

PhD, Staff Development and Training Unit

"My PhD proves very useful since I need credibility, and need to know where academics are coming from and how they react. I work entirely by myself with sporadic supervision, thinking things through myself and charting my own direction. I love the technology and the bright people I meet. I had to learn loads, so I taught myself by devouring text books on management and other sciences - all of which were accessible and un daunting. By far the most useful attribute is that I understand the academic mindset."

PhD, UCL Business