Self-transformation and structural reconfiguration in coacervate-based protocells

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Supporting Information: Figures

Figure S1. Plot of turbidity (100 - %T; T = transmission) against total concentrations of FMOC-AA ([FMOC-AA]$_{Total}$) added to an aqueous solution of PDDA (100 kDa, 20 mM). The minimum concentration of FMOC-AA required for coacervation (critical coacervation concentration) under these conditions was ca. 9 mM.
Figure S2. Dynamic light scattering data of prepared coacervates one minute after coacervation at PDDA (100 kDa, 20 mM)/FMOC-AA molar ratios of 1:1 (a), 1:0.85 (b), 1:0.5 (c), 0.85:1 (d) and 0.5:1 (e); and PDDA (8.5 kDa, 20 mM)/FMOC-AA molar ratio of 1:1 (f). Main plots show raw correlograms and corresponding particle size distributions by intensity in the top right. $D_h$ is the hydrodynamic diameter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PDDA (Mw/kDa)</th>
<th>Ratio (PDDA:FMOC-AA)</th>
<th>Hydrodynamic Diameter / nm</th>
<th>Polydispersity Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>1 : 1</td>
<td>1234 ± 210</td>
<td>0.16 ± 0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>1 : 0.85</td>
<td>280 ± 17</td>
<td>0.15 ± 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>1 : 0.5</td>
<td>234 ± 13</td>
<td>0.23 ± 0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.85 : 1</td>
<td>2193 ± 450</td>
<td>0.07 ± 0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.5 : 1</td>
<td>3553 ± 828</td>
<td>0.11 ± 0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>1 : 1</td>
<td>2514 ± 288</td>
<td>0.19 ± 0.16</td>
</tr>
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**Table S1.** Hydrodynamic diameters and polydispersity indices obtained from DLS data (Figure S2) after one minute of coacervation ([PDDA] = 20 mM).

**Figure S3.** Plot of the concentration of FMOC-AA present in the continuous aqueous phase as a function of the total concentration of PDDA divided by the total concentration of FMOC-AA comprising the coacervate system prepared using 100 kDa (black) or 8.5 kDa (red) PDDA.
Figure S4. Plot showing change of pH with time after addition of 20 mM GDL to a PDDA/FMOC-AA coacervate (solid line) or a bulk solution containing 20 mM FMOC-AA (dashed line).

Figure S5. Photographic images of sample tubes demonstrating the reversible conversion of a PDDA (100 kDa)/FMOC-AA (1 : 1) system from a coacervate phase (a) to hydrogel phase (b) by addition of gaseous CO$_2$. Addition of gaseous NH$_3$ to the hydrogel re-establishes the coacervate phase (c). Formation of a self-standing hydrogel is shown by inversion of the sample tube and by the decrease in turbidity. Re-coacervation is accompanied by the formation of a turbid liquid dispersion.
Figure S6. (a, b) TEM images of a 1:1 PDDA (100 kDa)/FMOC-AA hydrogel (a) (scale bar = 500 nm) and a 20 mM FMOC-AA hydrogel (b) (scale bar = 1000 nm). Fibres observed in micrographs are stained with uranyl acetate (1 wt % solution). (c,d), Size distribution of FMOC-AA protofilament widths in 1:1 PDDA (100 kDa)/FMOC-AA hydrogel (c), and in control 20 mM FMOC-AA hydrogel (d).

Figure S7. CD spectra for hydrogels produced by pH-mediated transformation in PDDA/FMOC-AA coacervate media (solid line) or bulk solutions of FMOC-AA (dashed line).
**Figure S8.** Oscillatory amplitude sweeps of a PDDA (100 kDa)/FMOC-AA 1 : 1 coacervate-derived peptide hydrogel (closed symbols) and a hydrogel prepared from 20 mM aqueous FMOC-AA hydrogel (open symbols). $G'$ and $G''$ are represented by diamonds and circles, respectively.

**Figure S9.** Epifluorescence microscopy image showing of kinetic aggregates formed on addition of 20 mM of HCl to PDDA (100 kDa)/FMOC-AA (1:1) coacervate microdroplets; scale bar = 100 µm.
Figure S10. Formation of ring-like bundles of dipeptide nanofibres during transformation of PDDA/FMOC-AA coacervate micro-droplets into aster-shaped micro-architectures. (a) Low magnification TEM image showing two ring structures and fibrous network; scale bar = 2 µm. (b) High magnification TEM image of single ring-like structure (inset, scale bar = 200 nm) and high resolution image showing individual co-aligned dipeptide nanofilaments with an individual thickness of ca. 2 nm (scale bar = 50 nm). (c) AFM image of single ring-like bundle of co-aligned dipeptide nanofilaments; scale bar = 1 µm.

Figure S11. (a-c) Video images recorded every 5 s showing growth of an individual dipeptide nanofibre emanating from a PDDA/FMOC-AA coacervate micro-droplet. The tip of the growing filament is highlighted (blue star). Scale bar is 2 µm. (d-f) Video sequence showing two filaments (red and blue stars) growing and combining over time. Times between images: (d) and (e) = 5 s, (e) and (f) = 15 s. Scale bar is 2 µm.
Figure S12. Fluorescence microscopy images showing GDL-mediated transformations of micro-droplets to aster-like microstructures for coacervates prepared from (a) PDDA (100 kDa)/FMOC-AA (1 : 0.85), (b) PDDA (100 kDa)/FMOC-AA (1 : 0.5), and (c) PDDA (8.5 kDa)/FMOC-AA (1 : 1). Scale bar = 100 µm for all images.

Figure S13. Confocal fluorescence 3D stacked images of (a) bottom-view and (b) top-view of a self-structuring dipeptide network showing fibres emanating from individual coacervate micro-droplets and spreading across the glass slide. Image was recorded ca. 40 mins after GDL addition; scale per grid square length = 18 µm. All samples were stained with Hoechst 33258 dye.
Figure S14. Size distribution profile for coacervate droplets produced by centrifugation and agitation.