

Student Experience: Staff Update

This document summarises activity across the Student Experience Teams from October 2024 to November 2024. Staff have also included upcoming activities to look out for.

Arts

1. Launch of our new open access programmes

This term the Arts team have launched two major open access programmes, artsUnlocked and artsLab.

artsUnlocked is a series of drop in creative sessions, focussed on fun, accessibility and community. We have launched weekly drop in sessions in Acting, Afro Fusion dance, Painting, Stage Combat and Break Dancing. Next term we will add Waccking & Voguing and Life Drawing, as well as launching our artsUCL Community Choir. These sessions are led by a combination of professional practitioners and student practitioners.

artsLab is our umbrella for in-depth, focussed workshops into creative practice for students who want to commit to something deeper and more challenging. Students commit to a series of sessions and work together in a cohort with a professional practitioner. This term, the artsLabs we have launched 2 artsLabs: Introduction to Film Directing with filmmaker Thomisin Adepeju and Climate Theatre Lab with Wise Ram Theatre. Next term we will be introducing a new artsLabs in Writing for Comedy, Storytelling Through Movement, Creative Producing and an exciting new space called 'The Playground' with Joseph Hancock, who is Education Associate at the Old Vic Theatre and leads their Theatre Makers programme. The Playground will be a creative space to help students generate, explore and test out their own creative ideas, leading to artsUCL Scratch Nights. We are also running a series of one-off workshops under the artsLab umbrella, in response to student demand. These have included Writing for Pantomime and Understanding the Edinburgh Festival.

2. New Bloomsbury Theatre and Studio season – 10 new shows and implementation of new model

This academic year we are launching a brand new Bloomsbury Studio season, giving students the opportunity to produce experimental work in a professional environment. We have begun with a sold out season of experimental work this term, and next term the Bloomsbury Studio will see 2 world premieres of work written by UCL students, including a brand new musical.

Our Bloomsbury Theatre season has got off to a fantastic start, with Musical Theatre Society's Shrek: The Musical sold out for all performances – 1600 tickets have been sold for a single Musical Theatre production

over 3 nights, which as far as we know is unprecedented. The Bloomsbury Theatre has also seen wonderful productions of Jazz Reimagined and The Welkin.

We have also improved many of the structures around student productions to facilitate more effective collaboration, more open and transparent opportunity pathways and safer spaces. These have included the introduction of professional support with Intimacy and Fight Direction, a brand new Bloomsbury Theatre Collaboration Guide (co-created with students) and revised bidding criteria.

3. 'Open Slots' launched

We have launched a new initiative for bidding shows in the Bloomsbury Studio called 'Open Slots', that enables any UCL student to bid for a Studio show, regardless of whether or not they are a member of a society. This makes putting on shows more accessible for everyone in our community, by offering a pathway for anyone who is not a member of a society (for whatever reason), or is unsuccessful at the internal bidding stages within a society. This term, it has resulted in us producing a brand new play by a post grad student who is not a member of any societies and would not otherwise have had a clear pathway to these spaces available to them. We hope as we move forward this will be one of many structures that make pathways within artsUCL more accessible, as well as resulting in more representative and diverse work on our stages.

4. New pianos and expansion of music practice facilities

Thanks to a generous donation, we have refurbished our music practice rooms and replaced the pianos with 2 new Yamaha B1 pianos. We have also bought 2 new Yamaha U1 SH3 silent pianos for two of our activities spaces, which will enable us to offer these rooms to students for music practice during quiet times (particularly mornings), when they are often free. The silent function on the pianos enables them to be played without disturbing adjacent spaces. We are also working to expand the opening hours to our music practice rooms for term 2, offering access from 7am in the morning Monday-Friday.

Sport and Physical Activity

1. The BUCS Active Wellbeing Survey is now live (closing 16 December) and we are working hard to maximise UCL student engagement to ensure the insight generated by this national study is relevant to our student population. Please complete the survey and encourage others to do the same: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N2S92MM>
2. Our gym is being refurbished! The gym will close for works at 21:00 Friday 6 December and re-open with brand new kit in Term 2. During the closure period all current members will receive a full freeze on membership and can access any other UK university gym via the [BUCS UNiversal gym scheme](#). Read more about the renovation here: <https://studentsunionucl.org/articles/bloomsbury-fitness-christmas-refurbishment>

3. On the back of your feedback we made some changes to Sports Night. We changed the free drink token distribution to make it a bigger part of the night and Jack Sibeon (Sports Officer) and James Roberts (Sports Rep) hosted a feedback session to understand how to continue improving Sports Night in Term 2.
4. BUCS sporting successes included. With two matches left to play, UCL Badminton Women's 1st Team have already claimed the league title for the BUCS Premier South- an amazing achievement. Snowsports club achieved our first medals of the season, bringing back 1 gold, 2 silvers and a bronze. Eliana Woosnam sealed a gold and bronze. Elite athlete, Xiaoyu Hu won a silver.

Future dates for your diary

27 January – 2 February: This Girl Can Week

1 March: UCL Charity Swimathon

21 - 28 March: London Varsity Series 2025

30 April: UCL Campus Run

7 June: Mandy Walker Alumni Games

Student Social Impact

5. After a smashing turnout at our first-ever Welcome Big Help Out, we have worked to deliver 6 more Big Help Outs in term one. At these group volunteering events where, students supported our amazing third-sector organizations with activities such as big litter picks along the Thames, biodiversity restoration in East London, and bag packing for holiday goodies. We will continue to have more big help outs in the new year so reach out to us if you're looking to get more involved.
6. We ran a series of Social Hackathons, where students worked as a team to hack challenges our community organisations face. As a highlight, for one of our hacks groups of 15 students (and two, adorable service dogs) worked together to support an accessible narrow boating organisation to establish a better marketing and social media presence to develop an action plan to solve problems identified by a charity partner.
7. For the post grads out there, our Community Research Initiative engaged dissertation programme is in full swing! If you are looking to make more of a social impact with your dissertation research, our programme gives you the chance to partner with voluntary and community sector organisations to design and carry out your research project. Look out for the post-grad newsletter for our “Community Research Corner” for more information.

