

2021-22

# Impact Report

where **more** happens

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Headline Facts and Figures</b>	3
<b>Emerging from the Covid-19 Pandemic</b>	6
<b>Strategic Priorities</b>	8
Priority One: Student Wellbeing & Belonging	9
Priority Two: Student Partnership and Change	11
Priority Three: Postgraduate Students	12
Priority Four: Student Education	14
Priority Five: Student Activities and Development	16
Priority Six: Accountability, Partnerships and Governance	19
<b>Looking Forward</b>	20



# Introduction

## **We are pleased to introduce the Students' Union Annual Impact Report 2022.**

In the past year, the Union has continued its exciting programme of renewal and development, towards our long-term goal of working with UCL to achieve an outstanding experience for all our students, and becoming one of the best Students' Unions in the world.

2021-22 has been a year of rebuilding for the Union and rediscovery for our students after all the disruption from Covid. As the restrictions have eased, students have returned to campus, and we have worked hard to support them to have the best possible return to university life.

We began the year with our largest ever Welcome programme, taking over the Main Quad for an incredible week of student led-activity to help everyone feel welcome and inspired as they returned to campus. Over the Welcome Period, we ran over 500 events across the whole of UCL and in venues across London. This led to a significant increase in student satisfaction with students' Welcome to UCL.

One of the key things we've noticed this year as students have returned to campus is that they are keener than ever to participate in a full range of extracurricular activities. The Union's officer and staff team have worked hard to support them in doing so. As a result, we have seen record numbers joining clubs and societies, volunteering in the local community, participating in our new TeamUCL sports leagues, and getting involved in the arts via performing in the Bloomsbury Theatre.

Students also turned out in record numbers to vote in our elections and led our societies in hosting more events than ever, with over 1,000 external speakers including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Our team also supported around 1,000 students in challenging circumstances through our Advice Service. Also this year, we expanded our International Festival, developed a new programme of major cultural celebrations and continued our work to improve our cafes, bars and shop to offer improved ranges and improve the sustainability of our products.

As a result of all this hard work, our student satisfaction has continued to rise and was the most improved question in the National Student Survey for UCL in 2021 the second year in succession. It's been a terrific team effort that has delivered fantastic results.



## Introduction CONT.

We are hugely grateful to UCL for the support to expand our work and help us get through the significant disruption to our income caused by the pandemic. The support provided has meant many more students have been able to participate in life-changing activities, learn new skills and feel a strong part of the university community.

Despite all the good news, we are well aware that many students are still finding things tough and we have a long way to go to be one of the best students' unions in the world. A high proportion of our students are reporting that they are experiencing loneliness and isolation, something that increased during the pandemic but remains an ongoing challenge for many. We know that UCL has a major issue with a lack of sense of belonging and community, an area we want to focus on in the coming years. Many students are also facing financial hardship with the rapidly rising cost of living making life increasingly tough for those living on student loans that are increasing less than the rate of inflation.

In response to these challenges, we are pleased to be working with our university colleagues on a new Strategy for Student Life. This strategy will look at how together we can do even more to deliver an outstanding experience and ensure that all our students have the opportunity to make new friendships, develop their skills and confidence, and most importantly, feel part of a vibrant and inclusive community at UCL. We hope that a new shared vision for student life, developed in partnership with UCL, along with a recognition of the need for long-overdue investment in a new students' union building and improved sports facilities will be key building blocks for UCL's new strategy when it is agreed later this year.

Thank you to everyone who has played a role in the success of the Union this year, our elected officers, our fantastic staff team, and all of UCL's staff who have done so much to support students during the pandemic and now as we return to a new and improved student experience after Covid. Finally, thank you to our amazing students who have continued to do incredible things by supporting each other, contributing to the local community, and making UCL the very special place it is.

**Ayman Benmati** Chair of the Board of Trustees

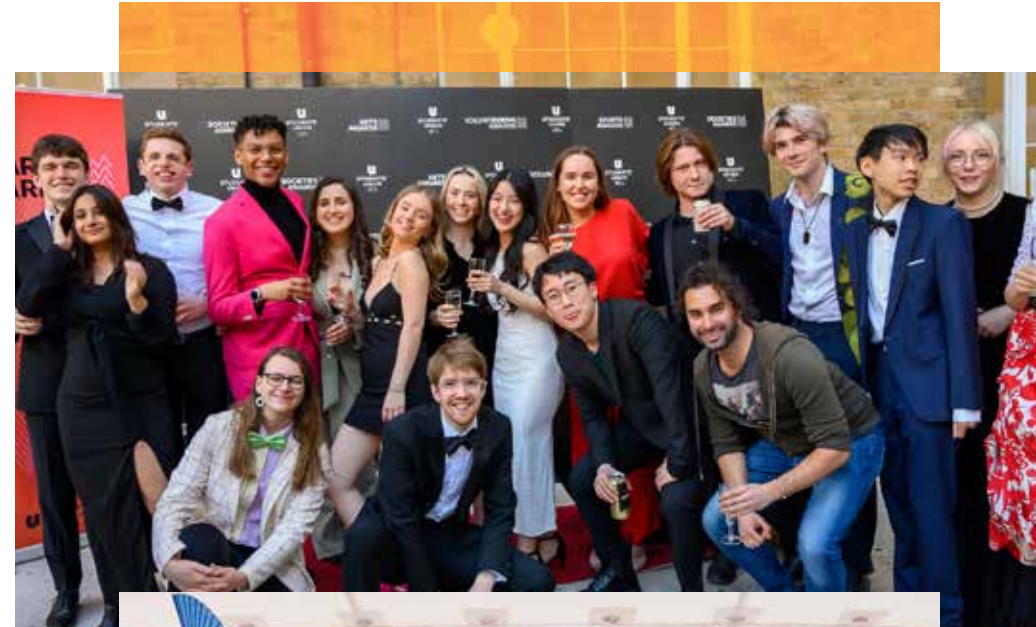
**John Dubber** Chief Executive



# Headline Facts and Figures

2021 – 22 was a year of rediscovery. After two years of significant disruption to student life, our members, new and old, returned to campus and started making up for lost time.

- **Satisfaction with the Students' Union measured by the National Student Survey rose again in 2021 up to 4th in the Russell Group. This is a climb from 18th in 2018 and was the most improved score for UCL in the National Student Survey for the second successive year.**
- More than 20,000 students joined a club and society this year. The first time in UCL's history this figure has been reached. 41% of all UCL students were a member of one or more student-led groups this year, another new high.
- **Students took up 83,700 club and society memberships this year, up from 48,249 in 2020-21. On average each club or society member joined four or more groups.**
- 6,211 students engaged in our Arts Programme this year, joining an ArtsUCL society and exploring, performing, and developing in everything from opera to jazz, musical theatre to drama.
- **7,067 students joined a TeamUCL sports club this year, competing against university teams around the UK. TeamUCL surpassed 7,000 members for the first time, and we now have our largest ever selection of clubs for students to join, with 75 sports represented. This is a 15% increase on pre-pandemic engagement.**
- We know that money can be a barrier to engagement with extra-curricular activity, so we launched a new Participation Fund to cover the cost of getting involved in student life.



- **Overall, we supported 362 different Clubs and Societies, with 54 new groups this year.**
- We launched our new TeamUCL Leagues with over 500 students participating across 6 different sports at beginner level, helping more students to get active.
- **We invested resources in developing departmental societies, helping to reach more students across UCL. We affiliated 18 new departmental societies this year, taking our total to 29, and membership of these groups increased by 410%.**
- We hosted more than 6,000 events throughout the year, up from 3,307 in 2020-21, with one of the most diverse events programmes we've ever had, helping build a stronger sense of community and belonging for our students.
- **More than 8,000 students attended 26 student-led Bloomsbury Theatre productions this year. These productions were performed, produced, and delivered by more than 700 students from our societies.**
- We launched a new website and increased the number of pages viewed this year to 9 million, up from 5 million in 2020-21. We had more than 2.7 million visits throughout the year, our highest ever.
- **Our Advice Service supported 998 students with complex cases related to housing employment, academic issues, and money issues. Through the intervention of our Advisors, we've saved students £51,043 this year.**
- Our peer-led Language + Writing Support Programme 1-2-1 appointments resumed in-person, and 282 students benefited from 1-2-1 support with their academic writing.
- **We held the largest student election in the UK for the second year running, with 2,948 nominations for roles leading clubs, societies, and the whole Students' Union. A record 10,219 students voted during Vote Week. For the first time at UCL, election turnout hit 21%.**



- More than 2,000 students actively volunteered in the local community, giving 72,400 hours of their time last year – a new UCL record, and an increase on pre-covid figures (2019 was 63,000 hours). We have more than 500 different volunteering opportunities available for students to volunteer in London.
- **1,771 students participated in our Project Active exercise programme, 38% of those participating described themselves as ‘inactive’ before getting involved.**
- We have supported 166 students in our 19 High-Performance Teams and 26 Elite Athletes through our Elite Athlete programme, including Deborah Alawode, who has secured selection for Team England and will be competing in the Commonwealth Games in summer 2022.
- **We reopened all our cafes, bars, and gym after enforced closure due to Covid. We launched a new café concept in the Lewis’s Building and invested in improvement works across all our outlets. We’re preparing to open new convenience stores in Bloomsbury and UCL East.**
- We recruited and supported more than 1,900 Academic Representatives.
- **During the Welcome fortnight we delivered 523 events, up from 174 in the last in-person year (2019). 8,700 students attended our two-day Welcome Fair, and 90% of our Welcome events were alcohol-free.**
- Our in-person International Festival, Lunar New Year celebrations, and Winter Arts Festival all returned bigger and better, with events, activities and live performances across campus. The scale and volume of culturally significant events continue to expand with thousands of students and members of the local community joining our Asian Spring, Norwuz, and Filipino festivals.
- **We hosted over 1,000 guest speaker events, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.**
- We developed and launched a new online marketplace for students to list items they no longer need, contributing to a sustainable circular economy.
- **We’ve launched a new Sustainability Strategy with the aim of being a Net Zero organisation by 2030, a major part of our work focuses on our supply chain. This year we made oat milk the default milk product across our cafes.**
- We hit the milestone of 30,000 students trained to be Active Bystanders, helping to keep our community safe and free from bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct. We also launched a new training programme for our student leaders to help tackle sexual violence.
- **Our Sabbatical Officers ensured that creating new child friendly study spaces, and prayer spaces, is now prioritised in UCL’s Estates plan.**
- We were shortlisted for national awards including the BUCS Diversity and Inclusion Award, and NSVA awards for development, best event, and best community initiative.



# Emerging from the Covid-19 Pandemic

*I can't build a comfortable state for you, without you... building a future without (the) young generation is something that is impossible.*

President Zelenskyy of Ukraine, 10 June 2022, speaking to UCL Ukrainian Society.

Covid-19 shaped our work in 2020, and in much of 2021 - shifting our priorities and recalibrating our focus. Entering the new academic year in summer 2021, we were keen to return as much of our in-person activity as possible, taking forward everything we'd learnt on delivering Covid-safe activity. We delivered our largest ever Welcome programme, with significant online provision alongside a significantly expanded in-person range of events and activities. We trained and supported our clubs and societies with new protocols and supported the wider UCL community to deliver a Covid-safe campus.

**2021-22 offered us the chance to re-establish student-life on campus.** After 18 months of disruption, isolation, and online communities, we were more determined than ever to make up for lost time and help students make the most of UCL. 2021-22 presented challenges for our members, but our student leaders consistently rose to meet these challenges head on, leading their communities and helping to make UCL a safe, welcoming, and supportive place. Below are three examples of extraordinary student leadership from this year.

In August 2021, the Taliban took hold of Afghanistan. Equity Officer and Afghan Refugee, Arifa Aminy, [spoke to ITV News](#), "the most vulnerable people are women and children who are now displaced - they don't know what the future is going to bring them. The main thing the government in the UK can do is make sure other countries don't abandon Afghanistan. We need help in Afghanistan for women and children"

Many Afghan students study at UCL, and we were deeply concerned for their wellbeing and safety. We contacted our Afghan society and offered support. We then started to mobilise students to support Afghan refugees arriving in London. Through our Volunteering Service we established opportunities with refugee charities in London and recruited students in roles. Later in the year **we hosted a Cultural Showcase fundraiser in the Bloomsbury Theatre and raised over £1,200 for refugee charities in London.**



Once term one was underway, reports of a worrying increase in drink-spiking across the UK started to emerge in the national media. Student-led campaigns to boycott venues until they improved their safety were launched across university cities. We supported our student groups to organise boycotts and closed our venues in support of the national 'Girls Night In' campaign for an evening in October. Our venues are different from high-street venues, they're safer, student-only spaces, however, we listened to students and developed a number of new initiatives, to help make them even safer. We are committed to running the safest venues in London.

We created a regular forum for feedback between students and venue staff to address emerging issues and concerns. Delivered additional training for door supervisors and ensure all door supervisors are trained in tackling sexual violence and responding to issues raised at events. Increased the number of security staff and venue supervisors on busy nights so there are always additional staff members present with a focus on student safety, and clearly communicate the process for reporting sexual harassment and assault.

In February, Russia invaded Ukraine. The devastating impact of the war was felt across our community. We worked collaboratively with UCL's leadership team to provide support to our Ukrainian students and began mobilising a student-led response. **Students in our SEES Society began collection drives of vital supplies to which thousands of items were generously donated. SEES Society facilitated the shipping of 1,600 boxes of supplies to Ukraine.** Jack Dean, Postgraduate Officer for the SSEES Society, talks about his work helping to lead this effort, "packing up the boxes was an emotional time for our members". [Watch Jack's story.](#)



In June, we were honoured to host the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to speak to our Ukrainian Society and Ukrainian societies at eight other universities. Ukrainian Society President, Anton Korchagin asked on behalf of UCL's Ukrainian community, "Many young Ukrainians are currently studying or working abroad, receiving high academic qualifications and experience. This generation of Ukrainians wants to move their country forward, it worries about the future of their homeland, and it wants to contribute to the rebuilding and development of a new Ukraine. In addressing those young Ukrainians who are currently abroad, what main message would you like to convey to them and what are your personal plans and programmes in motivating them to come back home to avoid brain drain"

"I think that's a great question", said President Zelenskyy. **"There's a lot of painful aspects in our history, and because of which we've lost the most precious (thing) we have, the smart people, the 'brains'." He continues, "I can't build a comfortable state for you, without you...building a future without (the) young generation is something that is impossible."**

President Zelenskyy's remarks in response to Anton sum up the theme of Ukrainian Renaissance covered in the hour-long session in June and underline the importance of developing the leaders of tomorrow. "Every generation is much better than the previous one, every generation is more modern than the previous one, so I cannot offer you something, but I can help you to implement your dreams to have them come to reality, to have your vision for the future come to action, that's what I can do."



# Strategic Priorities

In 2018 we celebrated the 125th anniversary of the Union's formation and launched '125 and Beyond', an ambitious three-year strategic plan. '125 and Beyond' aimed to make us the best part of the UCL student experience. We updated this plan in 2019 to raise our ambitions to, once again, make our Union one of the best Students' Unions in the country and the world – providing high-quality services and facilities that support UCL's aim to provide an outstanding student experience.

Our Impact Reports during the life cycle of '125 and Beyond' aim to give our members, and other stakeholders, updates on the progress and outcomes of our annual priorities in six areas of focus.

**Below we share some of our headline achievements, demonstrating how we have been engaging, supporting, and helping to develop students at UCL this year, as well as key improvements made during the full life cycle of '125 and Beyond'.**

The following summaries cover a selection of impacts made in each priority area.



# Priority One: Student Wellbeing & Belonging

**We aim to lead the way on improving student wellbeing and belonging at UCL.**

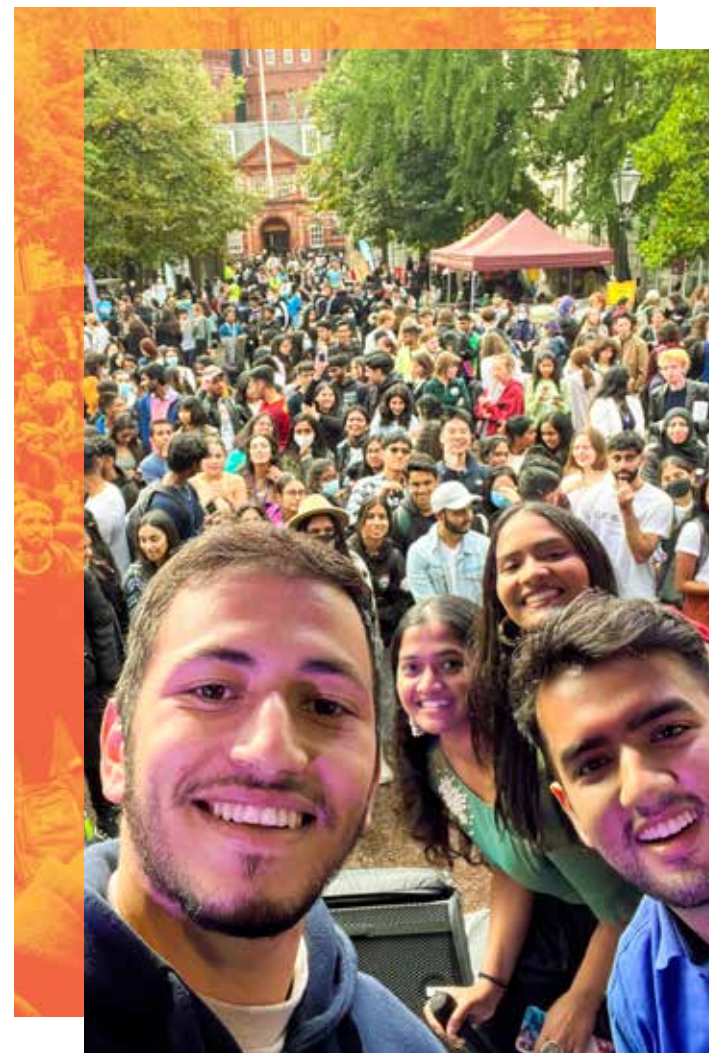
We believe that the Union plays an important role in every part of our students' wellbeing and their sense of belonging at UCL. Engagement with our different activities and services helps our students build support networks, skills and experiences outside of their studies. Active lifestyles and thriving student communities are inextricably linked to better mental wellbeing, and we are truly passionate about making all aspects of UCL campuses active, engaging, and welcoming for our members.

This year we reached a record high number of students joining clubs and societies – our most effective form of community building. In 2021-22, 41% of all UCL students were members of one or more clubs or societies. **A total of 20,032 students joined a student-led group this year, up from 14,330 when we embarked on our current strategy.**

***Societies are a really fun place to be - they're designed to bring people together, doing something that everyone enjoys. My network has grown immensely by being active within the various communities in UCL,***

Hasha Dar, third year Mechanical Engineering student.

Our research showed that cost was one of the most prohibitive factors in students with disabilities and those from BAME backgrounds taking part in sport at UCL. In October we launched our Participation Fund, a small grant pot designed to break down financial barriers to activity. Applications to the fund are made confidentially via a Students' Union advisor, which ensures anonymity and removes any stigma of applying.



## Priority One: **Student Wellbeing & Belonging** CONT.

The impact of this fund has been significant in ways we didn't anticipate. The draw of support, particularly for sport, has brought new students to our Advice Service, where our advice team were able to alert the students to other funding streams they were eligible for, including carers' allowances or university hardship funds.

This year, our Advice Service continued its invaluable work supporting students. **Our team supported 998 students with complex cases related to housing employment, academic issues, and money issues.** Through the intervention of our Advisors, we saved students £51,043.

During the pandemic, additional financial support from UCL enabled us to expand our team of Advisors to four, meaning we could provide more help to students at what has been a very challenging time. The Advice team also piloted a new Peer Support network, providing a space for students to talk about what's going on – from course worries to relationship issues – with trained student Peer Link Workers. We know that sometimes it can be difficult opening up to professionals and talking to other students about problems can feel more comfortable. We also know that there are a lot of services and support available at UCL and it can be hard to make sense of what's out there. Through a one-to-one video call via Microsoft Teams, Peer Link Workers supported almost 200 students by providing a safe space to talk through issues, offer another perspective and explore possible options for further support.



*40% increase in the number of students joining clubs and societies during the lifecycle of '125 and Beyond'.*

## Priority Two: Student Partnership and Change

**We want students to be true partners in the development of UCL and influential voices in the wider community and nationally.**

Our Policy Zones, introduced in 2019, has continued to improve and have been enhanced this year to ensure that our officers and student representatives have informed discussions on matters brought forward by students. They continue to provide us with direction and feedback to influence decisions in the Union, across UCL and further afield. This year, our Policy Zones have been pivotal in our responses to the various papers being consulted as part of UCL's development of its five-year strategy.

In January 2021, we completed the final part of a long-term project to improve the way students are represented at UCL. This academic year has been the first full year of implementation, with a significant change to our Sabbatical Officer and Student Officer structure.

The restructured Sabbatical Officer team ensures clear alignment with the Union and UCL's structures and provides more expert support for equality and diversity. A new role to the Sabbatical Officer team - an elected, full-time, Equity Officer has been created. We have also developed a new Equity Unit, with trained and specialised staff drawn from across the Union, to provide more support for campaigns, casework, and student-led projects to tackle racism, discrimination and harassment, and provide additional support to our student officers who represent marginalised communities.

*I could never imagine myself being that important overall, but now I'm here, I want to lead in a conversation, I want to be the one that makes a change. (As an LGBTQ+ person) it's easy for you to feel isolated just from the societal pressure, or maybe pressure from your family, and I'm always really proud when people want to turn up to my socials, and I'm really happy to see smiling faces.*

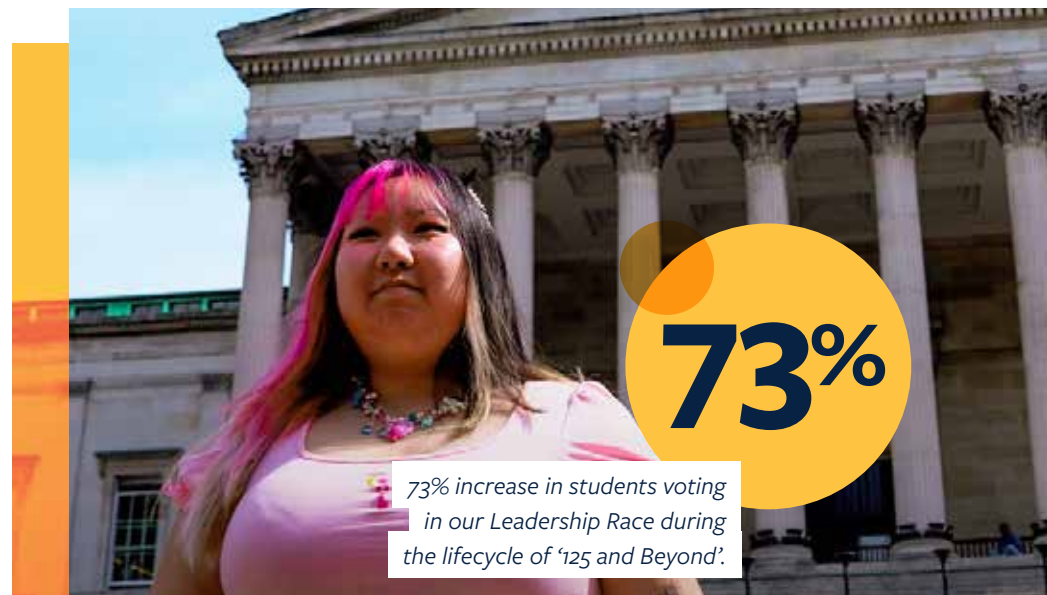
Angel Ma, LGBQ Officer

Our Liberation Officers, with support from our new Equity Officer, have led projects and campaigns this year to improve representation of Trans students, developed new tackling sexual violence training, delivered a programme of events for LGBTQ+ History Month and Black History Month, and launched a new campaign called 'FebruHairy', aimed at raising awareness of domestic

violence. Our Equity and Inclusion Unit regular reports on the impact of our work in this area, and these reports are available through our Advice Service.

We held our Leadership Race in March 2022, our annual election for students to elect next year's team of officers. **10,219 students voted in the Leadership Race, up from 9,473 in 2020 and the most ever at UCL.** 21% of all UCL students voted. Since launching our strategic plan, '125 and Beyond', we have increased the number of students voting by 73%, from 5,905 to 2019, to our new record of 10,219 this year.

In partnership with UCL Careers, our Volunteering Service piloted the UCL Charity Consultancy Challenge. Between 13 - 17 June, 51 UCL students worked in 7 teams to support community organisations with specific business problems. The programme was very popular with both students and community organisations, demonstrating the appeal of this approach to volunteering, and we're already planning for next year's challenge.



## Priority Three: Postgraduate Students

***We want to deliver the best postgraduate experience in the UK for our students.***

During the life cycle of '125 and Beyond', one of our major innovations has been the Community Research Initiative (CRIS), part of our Volunteering Service. CRIS is now in its fourth year. Developed as a user-led service ecosystem, CRIS inspires and supports Postgraduate Taught students to do something bold and courageous with their master's dissertation by connecting with London's voluntary and community sector to share knowledge and ideas. Listening in conversation with organisations is one way that students' learning and ideas can be directly informed by current community need in our capital. Conversations can develop into partnerships with student and Community Partners working together over the summer towards shared outcomes and outputs, useful and useable to the Partner. This increased research impact, democracy, and sustainability. **This year, 99 Postgraduate Taught students selected their own CRIS journey, from training workshops to coaching to events,** with 30 moving on to the Knowledge Exchange level of our programme, and 19 of them setting up their own collaborative projects with a community partner.

***I have learned a lot from my partnership, which will enrich my research, but has also enriched me as a person and a future urban planner. I have also been challenged in new ways, been in new situations, felt insecure about my role and capabilities. However, through these experiences, I have grown and learned new things about myself, and they have given me more confidence.***

Saskia Van Kesteren, Bartlett School of Planning, 21-22

***I find the skills sessions super useful and informative. Not only do I learn so much from the CRIS manager, but I learn from other students and their experiences, especially since we all come from different programmes. Thank you so much for holding these sessions - it is these sessions that allow me to feel I am trying to do something beyond just my dissertation.***

Ghalia Loutfi, Psychology & Human Development, 21-22



## Priority Three: **Postgraduate Students** CONT.

Project Active is our no commitment, no experience necessary, no judgement programme of professionally run exercise classes. It's aimed at getting people who typically don't participate in physical activity moving, and through this low impact exercise, improving their mental and physical health. Of the 1,771 students taking part in Project Active, 44% are postgraduate – Project Active has one of the highest levels of postgraduate engagement in any area of the Union. This success is due to postgraduate-only activity classes, pay-as-you-go pricing and activity that takes place on evenings, early mornings, or lunch times. This year we launched Postgraduate Summer; a brand-new programme of activity designed for students remaining in London over the Summer.

*I enjoy volunteering for Project Active because I love to get people more active, especially since postgraduate life can be very stressful. Sports keeps people healthy and improves their mood, which really helps students cope with the student life. Plus, Regent's Park on a sunny day will always brighten your mood! My favourite part of this role is seeing people achieve something they never thought they could do. Some runners completed their very first 5K with us, while others ran for the first time after years of inactivity.*

Adil Patel, PhD Physics

We continue to improve engagement amongst postgraduate students at UCL across the Union, and in recent years, participation in the Leadership Race election amongst postgraduate students has increased from 14.9% in 2019 to a new high of 21.3% in 2022. We have also seen continuing high levels of postgraduate memberships of our clubs and societies, which have risen significantly in recent years. Now, **26% of all club and society members study at graduate level.** This year, led by our Postgraduate Officer, we have delivered an enhanced events programme for postgraduate students – with weekly socials, trips, activities and events. All helping to build and maintain a thriving postgraduate community at UCL.



**26%**

26% of all club and society members study at graduate level.

## Priority Four: Student Education

**We aim to ensure that the environment at UCL is one where all students can fulfil their potential.**

Our network of nearly 2,000 Academic Reps have dedicated themselves to improving education at UCL and supporting their fellow students wherever they are studying this year. Academic Reps work in partnership with staff across their department and faculty to improve the experience of students.

We have improved our work supporting Academic Reps, and our work improving students' academic representation was reflected in the 2021 National Student Survey results. 59% of undergraduate finalists said that we effectively represent their academic interests, up from 51% in 2020. **During the lifecycle of our current strategic plan, we have increased this score by 14.5 percentage points. Moving us from second bottom of the Russell Group for satisfaction, to fourth.** Only 0.28% behind third place LSE. We've had the second biggest improvement over the last four years across the Russell Group, only behind LSE who started from a lower initial score and were helped by their fantastic new Students' Union building.



32%

*32% increase in student satisfaction in representing their academic interests as measured in the NSS during the lifecycle of '125 and Beyond'.*

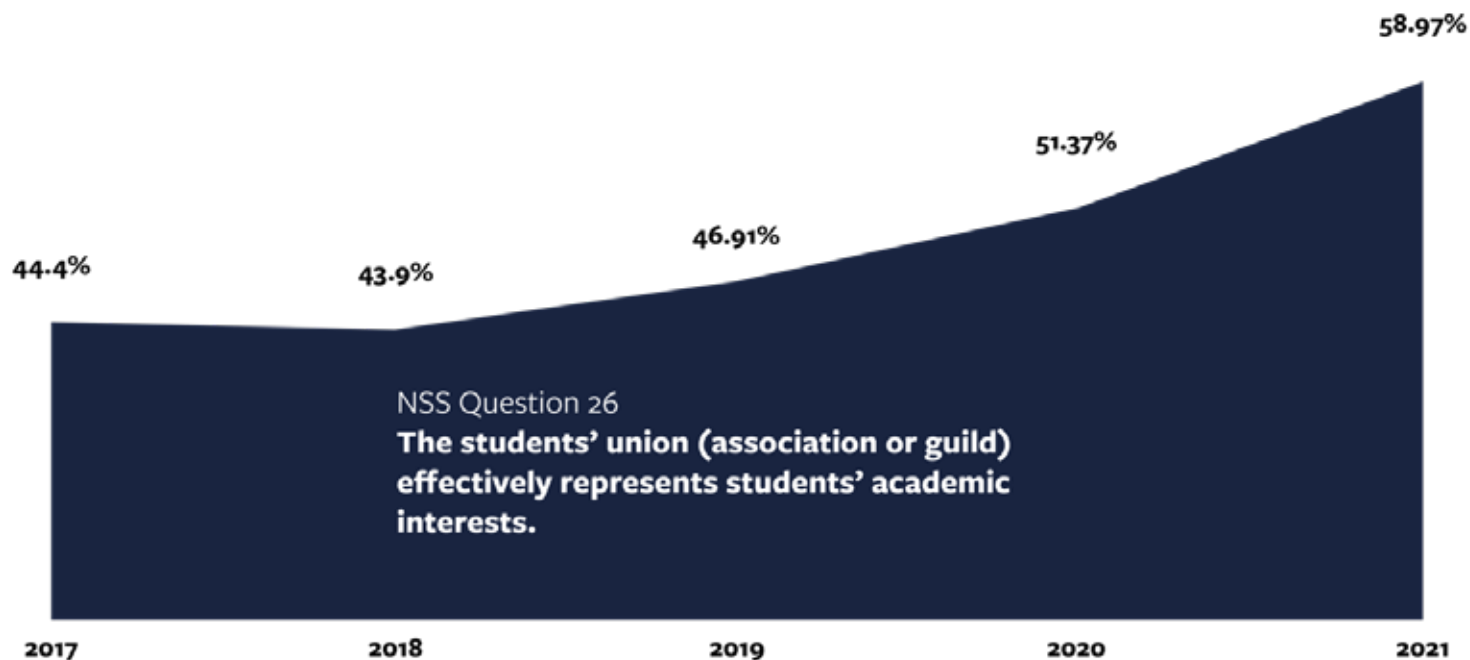


## Priority Four: **Student Education** CONT.

This increase is a significant achievement given that with all other major Unions in the Russell Group have large, modern, students' union buildings and sports facilities which we lack, which we know affects the way in which students respond to this question.

*I love being a faculty rep! My work as a rep has centred around committee membership: providing the student voice and in particular the postgraduate research student voice on some of the key decision-making bodies at UCL.*

Graham Van Goffrier, Faculty Rep and a member of one of the Union's key decision-making bodies, Education Zone.



University	%
Sheffield	69
Queen Mary	62
LSE	59
<b>UCL</b>	<b>59</b>
Imperial	58
Queen's Belfast	57
Leeds	57
Exeter	56
Glasgow	55
Cardiff	55
Liverpool	55
Southampton	50
King's	48
Nottingham	46
York	45
Newcastle	44
Birmingham	44
Edinburgh	43
Manchester	42
Bristol	41
Warwick	39
Durham	29

## Priority Five: Student Activities and Development

**We aim to provide a fantastic student activities programme that enables our members to meet new friends, learn skills, develop their confidence and make more of their time at UCL.**

We have consistently increased the number of student-led clubs and societies, and students joining these groups, during the life cycle of '125 and Beyond'. However, more than ever before, the last two years have taught us that community is vital.

Over the past year we have continued to increase our support to our student clubs and societies, responding to ever-growing demand from students wanting to get involved in more extracurricular activity. **More than 20,000 students joined a club and society this year. The first time in UCL's history this figure has been reached.** 41% of all UCL students were a member of one or more student-led groups this year, another new high.

Thanks to additional grant funding from UCL, during the pandemic we were able to increase our staff support to clubs and societies, enabling them to run more events and providing improved training.

With the lifting of Covid restrictions, we were able to once again run a major programme of shows in the Bloomsbury Theatre. These productions were performed, produced, and delivered by more than 700 students from our societies. Overall, more than 6000 students engaged in our Arts Programme this year, joining an ArtsUCL society and exploring, performing, and developing in everything from opera to jazz, musical theatre to drama. With an additional 8,000 students attending 26 student-led Bloomsbury Theatre productions this year.

Participation in sports has also continued to grow and thrive, with 7,067 students joining a TeamUCL sports club this year, competing against university teams around the UK. TeamUCL surpassed 7,000 members for the first time, and we now have our largest ever selection of clubs for students to join, with 75 sports represented. This is a **15% increase on pre-pandemic engagement.**



## Priority Five: **Student Activities and Development** CONT.

This year we revitalised our approach towards Departmental Societies. Thanks to additional financial support from UCL during the pandemic, **we upscaled our approach to supporting our departmental based societies and widened our outreach by affiliating 19 new departmental societies across UCL Faculties, increasing membership by 410%.**

*Being a part of my departmental society has added a much needed social/ community dynamic to my department.*

Crook Society – Biochemical Engineering Department

With investment in a dedicated member of staff supporting these student groups, monthly check ins and a forum space for committee members, we are proud to have seen an increase in student activity in this key area of student-life.

Our Engineering Society received national recognition for their work by being nominated for Bright Networks Award in 2021. We launched a £15,000 Departmental Society Grant pot which facilitated 17 student-led projects, covering everything from socials for the Surgical and Interventional Science Society to funding workshops that created films for refugee children by the SLADE Society. This Grant has directly impacted over 3,000 UCL students.

*I feel much more connected to my department, since I help create events to bring people together.*

Greenough Society - Geography Department



## Priority Five: Student Activities and Development CONT.

We have linked every Departmental Society with key staff in their department, secured a collective £24,000 of core funding for 9 of our Departmental Societies and celebrated the Engineering Society winning the first ever Departmental Society of the Year at our Awards Ceremony in summer 2022.

*Having a Departmental Society helps us to liaise with and feed back to UCLMS. RUMS also helps me feel more connected to my department.*

RUMS - Medical School

As we have emerged from the Pandemic our commitment to promoting freedom of speech and the resulting programme of activity has continued to grow. **We facilitated over 1,000 external speakers' events across this year, with our societies utilising technology to allow us to host significant figures from around the globe, including President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine.**

We have a proud record of facilitating external speaker events, with no external speaker requests rejected during the past 6 years. We have worked to ensure that even the most controversial issues can be debated, discussed, and interrogated.

Through debates with senior politicians, business leaders, diplomats, experts and leaders in their academic fields, our societies have hosted events which broaden the horizon of students across UCL, exposing our members to a wide variety of often antithetical viewpoints, challenging them to see the world from different perspectives and to better understand the role they must play as global citizens. Our TEDx UCL Countdown 2021 conference which brought together experts across disciplines to demonstrate and amplify solutions to the climate crisis is just one example this year showing the role student groups play in tackling the challenges facing the world.

The ability to navigate complex and politically charged debates is more vital than ever in an uncertain world; while it is not always possible to predict what issues might polarise in the future, we know that the role of the Union in facilitating such debates will equip students to face these challenges.



# Priority Six: **Accountability, Partnerships and Governance**

**We aim to be one of the best students' unions in the UK and internationally, so that we can provide the very best services and facilities for UCL students.**

We undertook a review of our governance arrangements in 2019 and developed a Governance Improvement Plan to ensure we are governed to exemplary standards. We also undertook a mapping exercise against the Charity Governance Code which was refreshed in December 2020. We have already made significant improvements to our governance arrangements in all areas of our work, including improving our induction and training for new trustees and introducing an induction programme for new Board Committee members, adoption of a series of governance policies to ensure we are clear and transparent about our practices and expectations, reviewing the employment policy and procedures for sabbatical officers, and more opportunities for the Board to discuss and be briefed on emerging and topical issues.

Our communication work has continued to go from strength to strength as we emerged from the pandemic. Digital communication, primarily our social media channels, website, and email newsletters, continue to be the most effective form of communicating with our members. In the nine months of the academic year, from September to June, we reached 242,321 through our Facebook activity, and 194,704 through Instagram. This is up from 213,156 and 115,891 in the same period in 2020-21 on Facebook and Instagram respectively. **89.5% of students, a total of 42,871, regularly read our email communication this year. Our newsletters were read 2.6 million times, generating over 640,000 visits to helpful advice, events, news, and opportunities.** We launched a new website in summer 2021, and significantly increased our web traffic. The number of pages viewed this year rose to over 9 million, up from 5 million in 2020-21. In total, more than 2.7 million sessions were logged on our website throughout the year, our highest ever.

During the course of the pandemic, we have had to make considerable financial savings and reduce activity from their usual levels, but with additional financial support from UCL to support our student activities programme, we minimised our losses and came through the past year more strongly than we had originally feared. This year we transitioned towards a more normal operating environment. **Due to tight financial control, we are set to deliver a small surplus for the third consecutive year.**



**Financially sustainable**

*During the life cycle of '125 and Beyond', we have transformed our financial position to deliver balanced budgets after a decade of losses.*



# Looking Forward

After a record-breaking and significant year, our most recent strategic cycle of '125 and Beyond' concludes. We've created the foundation for the next phase of our development and the launch of our new strategy 'Making More Happen'.

At Students' Union UCL, we share a vision to achieve an outstanding experience for our members during their time at university and to be one of the best student organisations in the world.

This year, extensive work has been undertaken to develop a new strategic plan. Following wide-ranging consultation with our students, together with major commitments made in our officers' election campaigns, we have identified the key areas we need to focus on in order to ensure that we are an effective, growing and well-run charity that is sustainable for the future.

Our new strategy sets bold ambitions to ensure that the Union has **effective influence**; provides an **amazing experience** for our members; builds a **vibrant and inclusive student community**; and that we operate as an **excellent Union**.

We want to use our influence to ensure that UCL delivers an excellent educational experience. We want students to be full partners in the development of the university, with a real say in how the institution is run and develops for the future. We also want our students to be able to have genuine influence across London and nationally.

We want to continue to develop and improve our services so that students have even more opportunities for pursuing their interests and passions; developing friendships across our diverse community; building the skills and confidence they need to be future leaders and decision makers; and above all enabling them to have fun and enjoy their time at university.

UCL is ranked in the top ten universities in the world for the quality of its research. We want it to be rated as highly for the quality of its student experience both within the formal curriculum and in all elements of wider student life.



## Looking Forward CONT.

To achieve this, we will need to grow and expand our social spaces and facilities for students; our support to clubs and societies; our volunteering service; our advice and advocacy support; and our programme of student events and social activities. Our biggest priority remains securing a new building for the Students' Union and decent sports facilities to provide world class spaces for our members and a genuine home for our student community at the heart of UCL.

The most successful students' unions, with the highest levels of student satisfaction, are currently twice the size of our Union, with far more staff and large purpose-built buildings. To reach their levels of student engagement and satisfaction, will require us to attract more funding and grow our income significantly so that we can better meet our members needs and expectations.

To deliver on our ambitions, we will require a strong and effective partnership with UCL to ensure the voices and priorities of our members are influential in decision making at all levels in the University.

Our new strategy also sets a bold new direction for the Union on environmental sustainability. After listening to student feedback, we have for the first time, adopted sustainability as a core value for the whole Union. We have an ambition to be a net-zero carbon organisation by 2030 and to be the most sustainable students' union in the UK. Our members expect us to be an exemplary organisation for sustainability, in line with their concerns and values. We therefore need to deliver on a triple bottom line of engaged students, financial growth, and outstanding environmental sustainability.

Our organisation has come a long way over the past few years. We have been one of the most improved students' unions in the country. This has created a strong foundation on which to build. Over the next few years, we will be looking to stretch our ambitions further to ensure excellence in every area of our work and aim to make our Union one of the very best.

The improvements we are aiming to achieve will be transformational for the experience of students at UCL, making a huge difference to their lives and supporting the success of the whole university.

Our forthcoming Impact Reports will focus on the priorities set out in our new strategic plan.



# Impact Report

2021-22

**U** STUDENTS'  
UNION UCL

25 Gordon Street  
London, WC1H 0AY

[studentsunionucl.org](http://studentsunionucl.org)