



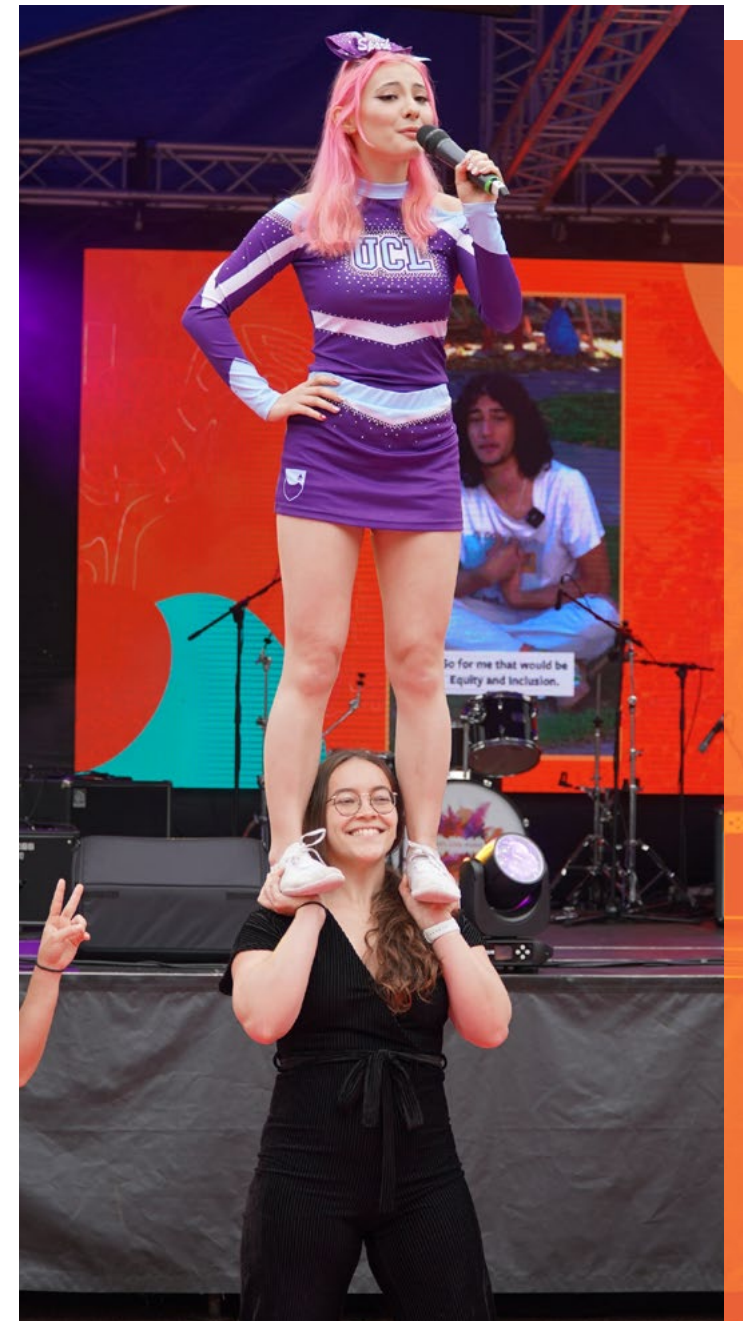
Impact Report

2023-24

where **more** happens

Contents

Introduction	1
2023-24 in Numbers	3
Why Students Get Involved	5
Our Priorities	7
Priority One: Effective Influence	9
Priority Two: Amazing Experience	13
Priority Three: Vibrant & Inclusive Community	19
Priority Four: Excellent Union	25
Looking Forward	29



Introduction

Over the course of the year we've continued our work delivering our ambitious strategy, Making More Happen. We are working to build an outstanding experience for all UCL students and become one of the best student organisations in the world. **We have reached more students than ever before, with our highest ever level of participation in social and extracurricular activity.** Democratic engagement has also continued to rise, and we have once again held the largest student election in the UK.

A key priority this year has been the expansion of our sport and physical activity programmes, including the launch of our inaugural campus run, continued growth in our Project Active participation programme, and the growth of our TeamUCL social sporting leagues. These make a real difference to students' mental and physical wellbeing, as well as strengthening the sense of community for all. More students have also joined our clubs and societies than ever before, helping them to meet new friends, develop connections across cultural boundaries, and pursue their interests and passions outside of the classroom. This includes record participation in arts activities such as music, dance and drama. These help to students to develop their leadership and communication skills, confidence and sense of personal agency, supporting their employability, and increasing their ability to help shape the world around them, both now and in the future.

Our events programme has reached more students than ever before, providing a gateway into our extra-curricular programme. Our Impartial Chairs programme, including an experiential learning trip to Northern Ireland, has provided a potentially life changing experience for a smaller number of highly engaged individuals. **These activities have all helped to build a strong, connected, interculturally aware, and more inclusive student community.**

We have developed a new programme of activity at Marshgate, UCL East, expanding our provision on the campus. Having dedicated space in Marshgate has enabled us to deliver more events and activities for students, helping to build a strong community and an identity for students studying on the campus.





This has of course been a challenging year for many students in our community who have been either directly or indirectly impacted by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. **Once again, our students have found strength to show extraordinary leadership in face of personal grief.** We've supported student groups affected by the conflict to hold vigils, guest speaker events, religious observances, and safe meetings on campus, helping to strengthen and protect these vital communities who in turn provide pastoral support to hundreds of students.

The new Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act came into effect this year, putting increased scrutiny and regulation on universities and students' unions from the Office for Students. **We aim to be the heart of the student community at UCL, ensuring our university is a place where diversity of opinion is not only accepted, but encouraged.** We actively seek to facilitate student led events where speakers are invited to broaden the scope of discussion and debate and contribute to the academic and non-academic development of our members. We have a proud record of facilitating a wide range of external speaker events, through our student-led clubs and societies, covering a diverse range of topics every year. We're keen to use this moment of national discussion on Freedom of Speech in universities to demonstrate the impact we have on our student communities when tackling the biggest issues in an uncertain world.

The cost of living continues to impact students significantly, not helped by a below inflation Maintenance Loan increase this year and continued increases in accommodation and living costs, leaving students far worse off than before the pandemic. To combat this, **we've awarded more in hardship funding this year than ever before,** helping to support students facing unexpected financial difficulties. We introduced new funds to support students unable to afford to bring a guest or family member to their graduation ceremony, covering the cost of gown hire and guest tickets. And we've awarded more funds than ever before to support students with the cost of participating in student life. This fund covers essential costs like travel expenses and specialist sports kit purchases, ensuring no student misses out on the opportunity to participate.

This year's Impact Report traces our impact against the key objectives of our Students' Union Strategy 2023-28 and the UCL Student Life Strategy 2022-27.

Students' Union UCL in 2023-24

21,524



21,524 students joined a sports club or society this year, which is 45.7% of all students. Up from 43% in 2022-23.

11,224



11,224 joined a Sports Club (24% of all UCL students up from 22.7% in 2022-23).

7,199



7,199 students joined an Arts Society (15.2% of all UCL students and up from 14% last year).

6,977



Together with our student-led groups, we held 6,977 events this year, up from 4,800 in 2022-23.

38,571



82% (38,571) of all students booked a ticket to an event through the Students' Union website.

512

International Festival



We held our annual International Festival in February, hosting 12 events with more than 512 students taking part. We held a 5-a-side World Cup, hosted 6 cultural society performances, and 13 workshops.

63



We introduced 'Hall Community Officers' for the first time this academic year. 16 elected students held 63 events for students in Halls, including winter craft sessions, picnics, football matches, badminton sessions and Eid celebration events.

11,177



We held a record-breaking Leadership Race, retaining our record of holding the largest student election in the UK. Overall, 3,452 students put themselves forward for election and 11,177 students voted. Our turnout increased to 23.8%, a new UCL record.

2,020



Our Advice Service has supported 2,020 students in need this academic year, with a wide range of challenges such as academic appeals, housing issues and financial support.

727

Welcome 2023

This year we held our largest-ever Welcome fortnight. Together with our student-led groups, we hosted more than 727 events, up from 620 in 2022. More than 12,500 students joined a club or society during Welcome Week, and we showcased 70 live club and society performances on the Main Quad festival stage.

2,000**Academic**
Representatives

We elected and supported a network of over 2,000 Academic Reps across every department at UCL who dedicate themselves to representing the academic interests of students and improving education at UCL.

6,130**ACTIVE**
BYSTANDER

We trained more than 6,000 new students to be Active Bystanders, helping to create a safer campus.

**420**

Our Advice Service supported over 420 students with housing queries. 10% of the students we supported were either experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

**TASS Accreditation**

We have continued to professionalise our sporting offer and achieved a key objective in the Student Life strategy, TASS (Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme) accreditation.

501

501 students, staff and alumni took part in our inaugural Campus Run at UCL East, helping to create an accessible pathway into physical activity.

£227,485

We have awarded £227,485 in hardship funding this year across our Activities Participation Fund, Gender Expression Fund and Sarah Douglas Hardship Fund.

**25%**

Since the introduction of 50p disposable cup levy across our cafes last year, 25% of hot drinks are now sold to customers using reusable cups, up from 18% last year.

**£1.3m**

We're proud to be a London Living Wage employer and put money back into students' pockets by providing flexible and rewarding jobs on campus. This year, we paid more than £1.3m to our student staff team.

420K

We reached 420k people via Instagram this year, an enormous increase from 246k in the previous year.

147

Our clubs won 48 Bronze and Silver Medals, and 51 Gold medals in competitions across the year – our best ever. We're 19th in the BUCs league table

Why Students Get Involved

As part of our work measuring the impact we're making through the Student Life strategy, we asked students what motivated them to get involved with extra and co-curricular activity. Here's what students said:



"I was going to go to Drama/Musical Theatre school instead of university but decided to come to UCL instead. Being involved in artsUCL allows me to perform while still studying."

"To do some real things for something that I believe in, not just stop at theory."

"I'm aware that being at UCL and in London is a privilege, I otherwise wouldn't have access to opportunities to develop creative experience on as big a scale. For me this is Film Society, which helps me get more of a foot in the door in terms of career than a humanities degree."



"I feel that as a multifaceted person, it would be detrimental to me if I only ever did things that are relevant to my course."

"I love meeting new people, especially people from rich cultural backgrounds. I love learning new languages and talking to people in them."



“I’m passionate about exploring diverse interests and expanding my horizons beyond my academic curriculum at UCL. Engaging in activities outside of my course allows me to develop new skills, cultivate my interests, and foster meaningful connections with fellow students and members of the community.”

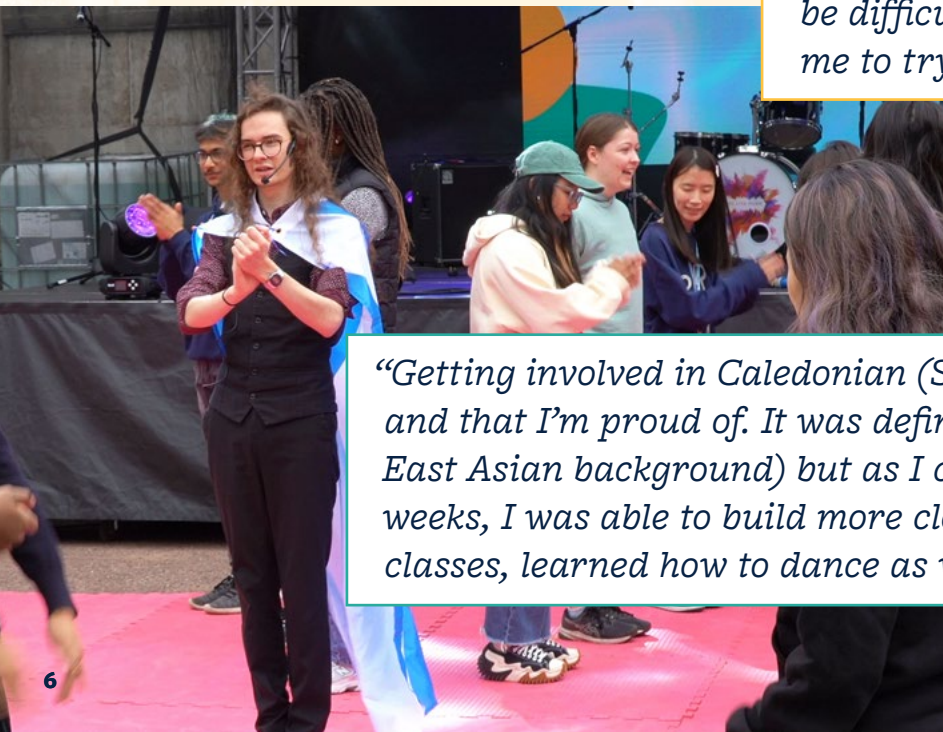


“I feel like especially with my course the workload currently is a lot, and many people like me tend to feel stressed when there’s too much weight on our shoulders, so I mainly go to societies to de-stress and have a few hours where I can forget about all the work I have.”

“There are so many opportunities for free or cheap events in UCL that it would be difficult to access outside of the university. I think this is a good chance for me to try a range of activities that I wouldn’t normally sign up to.”

“I would like to grow as a person not just academically.”

“Getting involved in Caledonian (Scottish Reeling) society was probably the best achievement I made and that I’m proud of. It was definitely something that was outside of my comfort zone (as I’m from East Asian background) but as I continued to push myself attending practice sessions every week for 10 weeks, I was able to build more closer relationships with people that I never would have met outside of classes, learned how to dance as well as fully enjoy it.”



Our Priorities

In 2023, we launched our ambitious strategic plan 'Making More Happen'. The strategy maps the next stage of our journey towards our long-term ambition to create an outstanding experience for UCL students and to be one of the best Students' Unions in the UK and the world.

We're committed to building a vibrant and empowered student community with real influence at UCL and beyond – one that enables students to enjoy their time at UCL, pursue their passions, see the world in new ways and develop the skills and experience to change the world for the better.

Our strategy has raised the bar, setting out our ambitions for the next five years, incorporating the major objectives from the Student Life strategy, taking us through UCL's bicentenary in 2026, and beyond.

Our vision and mission will be achieved by delivering impact in the following four strategic themes – Effective Influence, Amazing Experience, Vibrant and Inclusive Community and Excellent Union.

Our Impact Reports during the life cycle of 'Making More Happen' will give top-level updates on the progress and outcomes against our annual priorities in the four key areas of focus listed above and highlight some of the special moments of the preceding year.





Priority One: **Effective Influence**

As the representative body for all UCL students, the Union has one of the largest collective student voices in the UK. We're focused on making our influence effective and impactful; achieving the best possible experience for our members during their time at UCL. We want students to be true partners in the development of UCL as well as being influential voices in the wider community and at a national level.

In 2023-24...

- We held a record-breaking Leadership Race, retaining our record of holding the largest student election in the UK. Overall, 3,452 students put themselves forward for election and 11,177 students voted. Our turnout increased to 23.8%, itself a new UCL record.
- We elected and supported a network of over 2,000 Academic Reps across every department at UCL who dedicate themselves to representing the academic interests of students and improving education at UCL.
- We hosted an Academic Rep Conference at UCL East for the first time since the Covid pandemic. Our Academic Reps were invited to attend skills sessions on public speaking, negotiation and utilising their role to enhance their CV.
- We convened the national network of Russell Group Students' Unions. This included leading the development of a Russell Group Student Manifesto to influence national Higher Education policy in the run up to the General Election.
- We ran a high-profile communications campaign to promote student voter registration and engagement with the 2024 General election.



Sabbs from across the Russell Group have drawn together the big priorities for students, developing a manifesto highlighting what needs to change.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Student voice is at the heart of everything we do, and we continue to make excellent progress in this area, supporting and empowering students to shape their university experience. In March, we held our annual all student election, the Leadership Race. **This election gives all students the chance to choose who leads their student community – from the committee members of student-led clubs and societies to the Sabbatical Officers who help to shape and influence the whole of UCL.** Our March Leadership Race was our biggest ever, surpassing 11,000 voters for the first time. 3,452 students put themselves forward for election, 11,177 voted during the annual Vote Week and we achieved a turnout of 23.8% - a new record high at UCL, jumping ahead of the previous record of 21%.

Students are more engaged with their elected representatives, at all levels, and this year we consulted with student leaders to review our portfolio of Student Officers – students who volunteer their time as representatives of a specific area or portfolio of student life, like our Mature and Part-time Students' Officer. **This consultation led to the formation of three new student Networks - International Students' Network, Research Students' Network and Mature, Part-time and Carers' Network.** The introduction of new Networks will help to strengthen our communities through improved representation and community building.

Developing effective representation and influence for students is always centred around building strong student communities. **This year we introduced 'Hall Community Officers' for the first time.** 16 students were elected during our October 2023 Rep Election to organise community building events in their halls. Our Hall Community Officers have held 63, including winter craft sessions, picnics, football matches, badminton sessions and Eid celebration events.

We know our students' influence doesn't stop at UCL, they're active citizens with ambitions to make change nationally and internationally. **Over the past two years, we've led a collective of 24 Russell Group students' unions to shape the national conversation on student experience.**

[WATCH: PEOPLE OF COLOUR REPS TALK ABOUT THEIR JOURNEY](#)



Last year, this included gaining national media attention for our Cost of Living Report which remains the largest piece of fieldwork on students' experience of the devastating impact of inflation on student funding. This year, we brought Sabbatical Officers together from across the Russell Group to develop a Student Manifesto ahead of the General Election. The manifesto sets out student priorities for the next Government to safeguard the world-class education and experience our students deserve. **To mark the launch of the manifesto, we hosted a panel discussion in the House of Lords, sponsored by Baroness Garden of Frognal, which was attended by leaders from across the higher education sector.**

We published our annual **Student Priorities for Wellbeing Report** - a comprehensive overview of the key issues that have impacted student wellbeing over the past year. This year's report analyses the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on student wellbeing. **The cost-of-living crisis has had dramatic impacts on student wellbeing, with inflation rising to a 40 year high and increased numbers of students pushed into poverty.** The report found: 97% of UCL students are concerned about the cost-of-living crisis, Private rental costs in London increased by 17% over the past year with rents at UCL owned accommodation increasing by 11% between 2022-23 and 2023-24, and 81% of students are directly impacted by mental health difficulties.

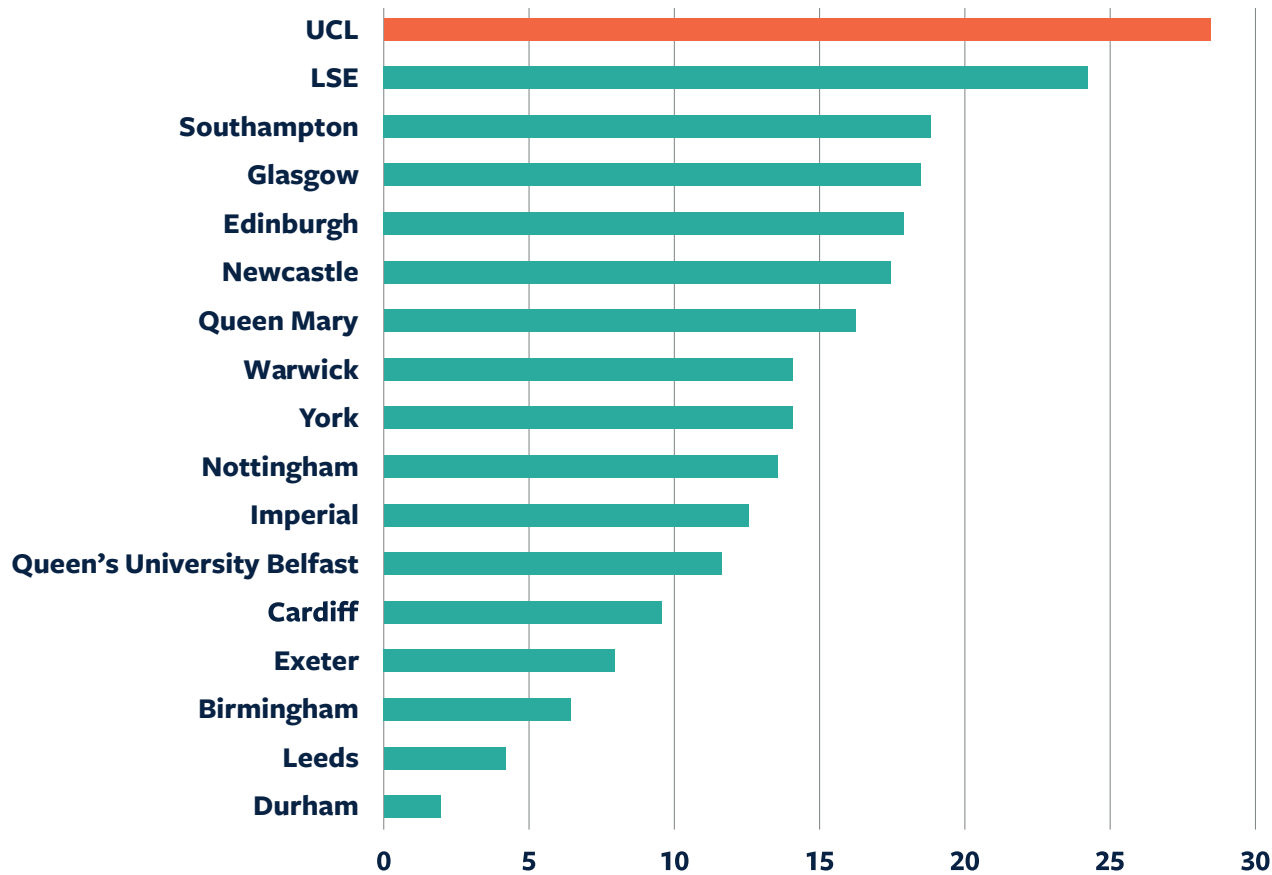
[READ: PRIORITIES FOR WELLBEING REPORT](#)



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We've been working hard to improve the students' union over many years and the impact of this work is reflected in the National Student Survey (NSS) results. Since 2017, we've been the most improved students' union as measured by the NSS Students' Union question, and the most improved across all NSS measures in 3 of the last 4 years. Overall, we are in 7th place in the Russell Group for students' union satisfaction, and each year we've continued to close the gap on the unions above us.

National Student Survey: Increase with change of SU question from 2017 to 2023 (Percentage Favourable)



Case Study

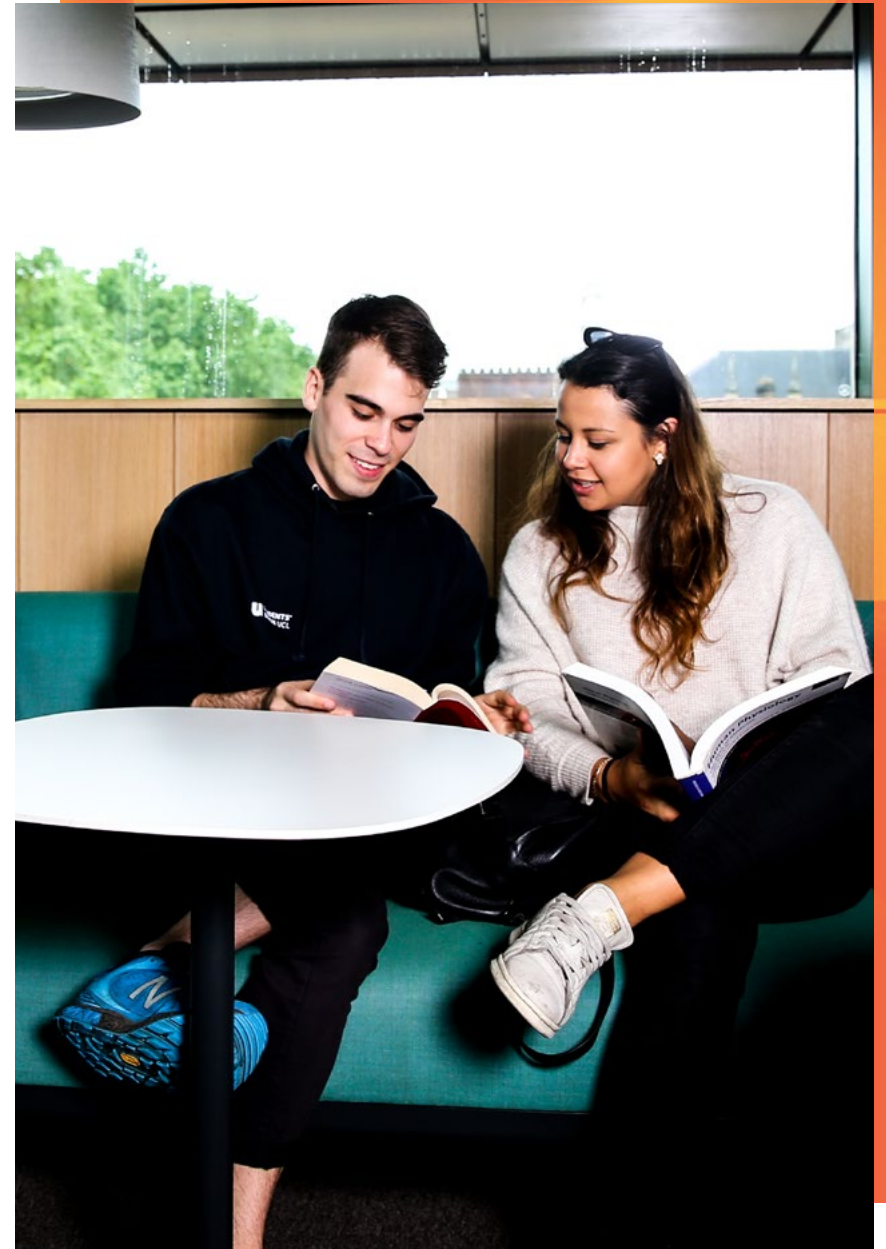
Supporting Academic Reps

Our network of more than 2,000 Academic Representatives are the foundation of our partnership work with UCL. Academic Reps work in close partnership with staff in their department and faculty making change to improve the experience of students they represent.

Sid Charaschanya, our Engineering Sciences Lead Department Rep, was recognised at the Education Awards as the Academic Rep of the Year. In his tenure as Lead Student Academic Representative for the undergraduate programme, Sid has represented over 600 students and has also been an indispensable co-chair on the Departmental Student Staff Committee (DSSCC). Sid liaised between students and faculty to foster a productive environment where feedback is not only heard but acted upon effectively. Sid's contributions were also pivotal in creating and maintaining the Discord community server for undergraduates, a testament to his initiative and leadership in enhancing student communication and support.

Sid's constructive and proactive approach in working with academic staff to provide feedback from students was commended in his Academic Rep of Year award nomination. Staff in the department said that Sid *"consistently seeks collaborative solutions and has been integral in implementing these solutions to improve the academic experience. This has all led to increase of trust from our students and I feel it is the work of our committee – and in particular Sid's strong engagement and proactivity - that have led to a measurable increase in student participation in the National Student Survey (NSS), from being one of the worse to one of the top 4 departments at UCL"*.

With 2,000 Academic Reps representing students at course level, we're ensuring that students are partners in decision making across UCL, impacting the lives of every student.



Priority Two: **Amazing Experience**

We want all our students to have an amazing experience at UCL outside of the classroom, with the best extra-curricular offer in the UK. We want our students to have fantastic opportunities to pursue their interests and passions, with opportunities to learn new skills, try new things, grow their experience and confidence, and develop new friendships.

In 2023-24...

- **21,524 students joined a club or society this year, 45.7% of all students. Up from 43% in 2022-23.**
- **Students who join clubs and societies join 3.8 groups each on average**
- **11,224 joined a Sports Club (24% of all UCL students up from 22.7% in 2023)**
- **7,199 students joined an Arts Society (15.2% of all UCL students and up from 14% last year).**
- **We launched major new events such as our successful UCL Campus Run, providing more opportunities than ever before for students to get involved in sports and extracurricular activity.**
- **Our research this year has shown that engaging in student life is more likely to lead to a stronger sense of community at UCL. Just 26% of students who don't engage in student life feel part of the UCL community, whereas 65% students who are just casually engaged do feel part of the UCL community.**
- **We're now a top 20 sporting university in the BUCS league table thanks to the ongoing success of our clubs. Our clubs won 48 Bronze and Silver Medals, and 51 Gold medals in competitions across the year – our best ever.**



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This year we began to significantly increase extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities at UCL, helping to transform student life at our university. This supports the goals of UCL's ambitious strategy for Student Life.

"I actually came to UCL because of its great reputation for creative extracurricular opportunities. The first thing I did after enrolling was to buy my FilmSoc membership because that was what I came here for."

Jenny-Ann Windbrake, Film Society, Drama Society and Musical Theatre Society

Participation in our wide range of student activities programmes remains very high and continues to grow. 45% of all students at UCL this year are part of a student-led club or society, the foundation of our student activity programme. **We're seeing the highest recorded number of students engaged in student activities, with much more still to come as our capacity expands.**

The benefits of engaging in Student Life are wide-ranging. Our research this year has shown that **students who regularly participate are more likely to feel a strong sense of belonging to UCL**, less likely to consider dropping out, more likely to have an established support network, more likely to develop skills and go on to apply what they learn at UCL to other areas of their life, more likely to want to champion equity and inclusion in their future life, **and more likely to have higher satisfaction across key NSS measures.**

This year we conducted large-scale research into students' experience with extra and co-curricular activity at UCL. More than 5,000 students took part, making this the largest investigation into student extracurricular engagement undertaken at UCL. The research has helped us to understand the depth of student engagement, with results showing that **more than 58% of all students are actively participating in Student Life related activities**, and half of all students would like to increase their participation level further.

Of students who are currently not participating, a third want to increase their participation – this represents a huge amount of untapped potential. Students who want to engage but can't are held back by time constraints, the logistics of balancing other commitments like family life, accessibility requirements, or a lack of confidence. The research has now given us a clear steer on how to expand our activities and break down barriers.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We now have the highest-ever percentage of students (24%) engaged in regular sporting activities. **Inclusive sport and physical activity remains our top priority** and our Project Active programme creates opportunities for students who wouldn't otherwise consider themselves 'sporty', or who typically face barriers to participation, to engage in low commitment activity. Our Project Active 'This Girl Can' week was our most successful to date, with 498 students taking part in 30 different events. 320 of those participating had never taken part in physical activity at UCL before. We launched a new mass-participation flagship event and hosted our first ever UCL Campus run on the Olympic Park in April, with 500 students, staff, and alumni taking part.

[WATCH: CAMPUS RUN HIGHLIGHTS](#)



We have continued to professionalise our sporting offer and achieved a key objective in the Student Life strategy, TASS (Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme) accreditation. **TASS accreditation is evidence that UCL now provides a supportive university experience where dual career athletes can thrive.** Each year, we support a cohort of athletes who compete nationally or internationally across a number of different sporting disciplines, however, until recently these students have had no flexibility over how they balance their athletic and academic lives. This has proved difficult for athletes competing in events that clash with coursework deadlines or exams, giving them a near impossible decision to make. We wanted to change this to make sport more accessible and have worked with UCL education committees to pass a new Flexible Learning policy.

This year we have again grown our Arts programme with more student shows and productions. We have also led the development of an exciting new partnership with the Royal Opera House that is seeing our students collaborate with professional dancers from the Royal Ballet. We have also created a new Arts Department within the Students' Union to help expand the provision of creative opportunities in areas such as music, dance, drama and visual arts. We have thousands of students who want to engage in these areas that we know are hugely beneficial for mental and physical wellbeing, the development of community and a sense of belonging, and can support the development of skills and confidence.

We are especially committed to ensuring accessible and inclusive opportunities to engage in the arts and have been working on a new plan for an accessible mass participation programme of arts activities for students that we will be launching early next year.

This year, our Volunteering team continued their successful programme of social hackathons, with more events and participants than ever before. They developed a new partnership with the office of the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience), to develop new extended learning opportunities for students. We developed two new offers, Lightning Hack (building on our successful social hackathon model) and the Science Communication Slam!



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We launched a pilot Pro bono Student Research Service. This service trains and empowers student leaders in research consultation and developing community engagement student opportunities. An early success in the project is an employment opportunity secured by one of the students who used their skills gained through the Pro bono leadership and development activities. They are now an evaluator for the Trellis Arts Knowledge Exchange programme. A key aspect of the Pro bono service is being shaped in collaboration with students, with the aim of having the service fully led by students in the future.

We held the third iteration of our Consultancy Challenge. This is our largest challenge-based learning opportunity – student volunteers quickly form and work in teams on a challenge developed by local community organisations with a student consultant. Consultancy Challenge includes four paid student positions to gain consultancy, brief setting, and community engagement training and skills. In 2023-24, additional funding from UCL's Organisational Development meant we could provide 120 student volunteer spots. Volunteers took part across 12 teams over one week. This is an increase from 8 challenges and 64 students last year. **Students are having impact in areas including improving the sustainability of organisational initiatives, strategy development including communication and evaluation strategies, growing volunteer numbers and volunteer engagement, benchmarking, and writing research proposals.** All ideas are developed from real-life challenges facing the community organisations and students learn key skills and gain experience that will enable them to create positive change in the world beyond UCL.

A skills-based volunteering programme has been developed and is being piloted during the summer break. The focus is on research skills being volunteered by postgraduate students to community organisations – including international. The research volunteering programme was developed for postgraduate taught students who are unable to experience community engagement with their master's dissertation. Students have reported enjoying the authentic experience of learning from and working with 'the people doing the real work' and that it makes them feel their academic knowledge is valued beyond their own degree.

"I personally believe in working with and empowering women. I did these projects to work in something that fits my values. Although empowerment is a buzz word, clichéd, it felt legit working with the people who actually 'do the work'"

Student perspective working with the New Black Film Collective

"My eyes are opened into this new world... I didn't know how it worked at all... I don't do anything creative, so this was an opportunity to experience a new sector... it was fun to work with other students as well as new people outside of the university – people from different backgrounds."

Student perspective working with the New Black Film Collective

Support provided to students to enable and empower them to undertake community volunteering remains essential to our student community. Our research has shown that students who participate in volunteering activity feel that it benefits their studies, their employability and their wellbeing.

"I was super thankful for this activity because having the chance to engage in the activities in the community really helped international students like me to feel more involved because we have the chance to meet local people and have conversations"

MA TESOL student

"I had been working on a volunteering project and I got lots of support in terms of DBS application, travel expenses, admin, etc. So I thought to myself, since it's this easy to join a volunteering programme, let me try and do something else myself during my second year that's more active and group based"

BSc Philosophy, Politics & Economics

Case Study

ArtsUCL participatory project with the Royal Opera House

In January, students from our Dance Society took part in a unique curated dance workshop exploring The Royal Ballet's Swan Lake, backstage at the incredible Royal Opera House.

Access to the arts is major priority of the students' union. We want to break down barriers to participation and make UCL a place where all students, regardless of background, can develop the creativity, innovation, and confidence that engagement in the arts provides.

Our new partnership with the Royal Opera House will help give our students opportunities we hope will inspire them on their journey into the arts.

The visit to the ROH included a dance workshop led by former Royal Ballet Dancer, David Pickering. David danced with the Royal Ballet for 23 years, including appearing in Swan Lake. After a panel discussion with ROH leaders, students then went on a backstage tour. A real highlight was the chance to observe principal dancers in rehearsal.



“We just don’t quite realise how complicated the whole backstage processes is, so just being able to meet the people to go in the studios was amazing and we had amazing opportunities to see dancers really in the act”

Student participant

The partnership is set to continue into the future and become a core part of our ArtsUCL programme.



Priority Three: **Vibrant & Inclusive Community**

We aim to build, support and energise our diverse student community, making it stronger and fostering a greater sense of belonging for every student. Our spaces are at the centre of the student community at UCL and somewhere where our members can access support and advice when they are in need. We want to be a global students' union, where all our students have opportunities to see and experience the world in new ways by engaging across our diverse student community, and we want our students to get the most out of living and studying in London.

In 2023-24...

- **Together with our student-led groups, we held 6,977 events this year, up from 4,800 in 2022-23. 82% (38,571) of all students booked a ticket to an event through the Students' Union website.**
- **We held our annual International Festival in February, hosting 12 events with more than 500 students taking part. We held a 5-a-side World Cup, hosted 6 cultural society performances and 13 workshops.**
- **We have awarded £227,485 in hardship funding this year across our Activities Participation Fund, Gender Expression Fund and Sarah Douglas Hardship Fund.**
- **We trained more than 6,000 new students to be Active Bystanders, helping to create a safer and more inclusive campus.**
- **We worked with UCL to develop a new partnership for the sale of campus merchandise which is strengthening UCL's brand, supporting a stronger sense of community and belonging on the campus, and increasing the students' union commercial surplus to support our charitable activities for students.**
- **During Welcome fortnight, together with our student-led groups, we hosted more than 727 events, up from 620 in 2022. More than 800 students signed up to volunteering opportunities. More than 40,000 tickets were booked for events, with many more students attending non-ticketed events. And more than 12,500 students joined a club or society.**



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We're proud that UCL is home to such an internationally diverse student population. Each year we celebrate this at our annual International Festival which takes place in February. **This year the festival included a Conversation Café; a language and culture day for primary school children; a food festival, featuring food stalls representing cultures from around the world; and a 5-a-side football World Cup.** Student-led groups also hosted activities including language taster lessons, a cultural dance workshop, visits to Embassies, a Chinese origami and calligraphy workshop, as well as an arts showcase featuring performances from Salsa society, Bhangra society, CSSA, K-pop and Musical theatre society.

Our student spaces, cafes, bars, and shops continue to grow and expand. This year, we launched a new on campus UCL merchandise shop in a newly refurbished space at 25 Gordon Street. **This has enabled us to introduce new and improved ranges of clothing, supporting a stronger sense of community and belonging for students.** Our products live up to the highest possible sustainability credentials and profits are put back into growing our student communities.

Our popular new convenience stores have helped students find budget friendly food on campus. Our cafe spaces always offer low-cost and ethical alternatives for students, and this year we've introduced of a new range of Asian hot food dishes, along with Bubble Tea in the George Farha Café.

Our Advice Service has continued to see an increase in casework this year. There has been a 19% increase in the number of student matters the team have worked on compared to last year. The most significant increase has been **enquiries into the Activities Participation Fund, which has seen a 200% rise in students seeking support from the fund.** Academic advice enquiries have also increased by 33%, with most students seeking support with the academic appeals process. We've also continued to provide detailed financial advice. In total, the Advice Service has worked with 2,020 students this academic year.

Housing has continued to be a growing challenge for our student community, with students seeking support with their search for accommodation, contract advice – checking tenancy agreements and explaining what they mean – and disrepair issues. **The Advice Service has also supported a number of students experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness,** in fact almost 10% of the housing cases this year have related to homelessness. In total, we helped over 420 students with housing issues.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

During this academic year, our Money & Budgeting Advisors have continued to provide excellent financial advice and support to students. **They have worked with students to grant more than £57,000 from our Activities Participation Fund.** This is a 133% increase on the value of grants awarded in 2022/23, and the fund remains open to applications all year round.

Our main hardship fund, the Sarah Douglas Hardship Fund, has also significantly increased the support awarded to students this year. This academic year, **101 students have received an emergency grant of £150 to help with immediate and urgent living expenses, and 84 awards have been made from the central Sarah Douglas Hardship Fund** to help students in financial difficulty with no other form of support available. We have awarded £168,125 through the Sarah Douglas Hardship Fund.

We have continued to administer the Gender Expression Fund and have awarded over £2,360 to students who are experiencing stress and anxiety at the disconnect they feel between their gender and identity. **Grants have been used to purchase gender affirming products, such as clothing, binders, packers and beauty products,** as well as being put towards travel to medical or therapy appointments.

“The fund was very generous, helpful and completely supportive. At no stage did I feel like the people who were providing the funds felt as though my needs were frivolous or “a choice” as is too often the case when it comes to support for trans people.”

A student supported through the Gender Expression Fund

WATCH: WELCOME
FAIR 2023





We want to empower our students to create a safer UCL. This year, our Active Bystander Programme provided training for 6,130 new students, **giving students the confidence and skills to safely intervene if they witness or experience problematic behaviour.** 20 student Workshop Leaders delivered our sector-leading programme to undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD students across campus.

The programme consists of an online module which introduces students to various unacceptable behaviours, and the 5D's of Active Bystander intervention, which is followed by a live workshop where students get to put their knowledge into practice through interactive, real-life scenarios.

88% of students said that they feel more prepared to intervene as a result of taking our programme. One student said that the course *"...makes me feel that I have made the right decision to study at UCL. Having such an education is of great significance for a person to become a good citizen and create a better society."*

The programme continues to lead the way in the sector on challenging unacceptable behaviours on campus and beyond.

Case Study

Helping students to disagree well

How do we help students build the muscle to disagree well in a challenging and complex world? This year we launched a new programme to train, develop and support student impartial chairs, giving them the practical skills to chair difficult discussions, navigate debate, and create spaces where freedom of speech is accessible to everyone.

We recruited 14 students from a broad range of degree courses and took them through a bespoke three-part training course focussed on: empowering debate, including role of an impartial chair and the art of facilitation to cultivate a balanced debate; enabling safety, including how to create a psychological safe environment, and how to challenge inappropriate behaviour; and building a legacy, enabling the students to reflect on the personal impact that the programme has had on them as well as how they can share their learnings with the wider UCL community.

We took the first cohort of Impartial Chairs on a five-day experiential learning trip to Northern Ireland where they had the opportunity to learn about The Troubles and peace and reconciliation in the Northern Irish context. The trip provided the Impartial Chairs with the opportunity to deepen their understanding of how to work within divided societies, the forces that can heal and build trust as well as those that can dissemble and destroy a diverse society.



Students described the trip as a ‘once in a lifetime opportunity’ with another sharing that the experience had inspired them to pursue a masters in peace studies. All participants felt that as a result of attending the experiential learning trip they had an increased their knowledge and understanding of the conflict and peace process in Northern Ireland; they had increased their awareness of their own personal biases, and how they impacted on their view about different people or communities; and they were better equipped to navigate discussions with those with differing views.

We will recruit more students into the programme next year and continue to expand our work in this area, utilising student Impartial Chairs to host challenging guest speakers throughout the year.





Priority Four: **Excellent Union**

The fourth aim in our strategy is to be an excellent students' union. In essence, we want to be a fantastic, efficient, well-governed and effective charity, that is one of the best student organisations anywhere in the world, so that we can effectively represent and provide fantastic services for all our members. We also want to be truly sustainable in our work and aim to be the most sustainable students' union in the UK.

In 2023-24...

- **We retained our Investors in People Silver accreditation for 2024-27.**
- **We have worked with UCL to develop a clear plan for a new Students' Union building. Work is now underway on RIBA Stage 1 design with an aim to complete full design and business case development over the next two years.**
- **We led the development of the national NUS Sustainability Charter to accelerate our transition to being a Net Zero organisation and help champion sustainability across all students' unions in the UK.**
- **We have continued to serve thousands of students every day via our fantastic cafés, bars and shops. Since the introduction of 50p disposable cup levy across our cafés last year, 25% of hot drinks are sold to customers using reusable cups, up from 18% last year.**
- **We're proud to be a London Living Wage employer and put money back into students' pockets by providing flexible and rewarding jobs on campus. This year, we paid more £1.3m to our student staff team.**
- **Our newsletters were read 2.7 million times this year and 9.5m pages were viewed across our website.**
- **In autumn 2023, we celebrated the 130th anniversary of the formation of the Students' Union, welcoming back students leaders from past decades and opening a new exhibition on the history of student life at UCL.**





We have been recognised as an excellent employer, achieving reaccreditation of the Investors in People Silver award, something only 15% of companies audited achieve. The award demonstrates that the right principles are in place across the organisation, but more than that, it means the people and leaders in the students' union are making active efforts to ensure everyone in the organisation is feeling the effects of a professional and positive working culture.

Financially, we will achieve a small surplus this year and are in a strong financial position to deliver our strategy. We have also continued to invest in improving our buildings and facilities. **This year we have refurbished the gym changing rooms and showers to improve facilities for students.**

This year we partnered with Genuine Solutions, an eWaste recycling company. The partnership enables us turn old tech into vital funds to support students in hardship. We're always looking for innovative ways to increase the number of students we can support, and **our new partnership with Genuine Solutions will help our students to reduce waste and raise vital funds. Old phones, cables, tablets, and laptops can now be ethically recycled.** We collect the eWaste, ship it to Genuine Solutions who sort and grade the waste. Anything that can be sold is repaired and resold, with the money raised given to our student hardship scheme, anything that can't be sold is recycled. The scheme is just starting to gain momentum and we hope to expand the number of collection points across campus in the coming year.

Our communications work has grown and developed in line with the growth of the Union. We have an excellent digital presence, with great in-house web development and systems capabilities. Our social media channels, website, and email newsletters, continue to be the most effective form of communicating with members, in fact our newsletters were read 2.7 million times this year and 9.5m pages were viewed across our website (up 1.5%). **In the nine months of the academic year, from September to June, our content reached 420k people via Instagram, an enormous increase from 246k in the previous year.** We have also launched a new presence on Xiaohongshu (RED), a Chinese social network. This presence is helping us reach members of our community not active on western social media.



WATCH: A BRIEF HISTORY OF STUDENTS' UNION UCL

For the first time, **we joined a UCL delegation to China to support conversion activity with offer holders.** Over the course of five days two of our Sabbatical Officers attended events in three cities, meeting over 1,000 students. The trip was a great success, with our Sabbatical Officers playing a key role in encouraging students to take up their offers and highlighting that core to a UCL education is the opportunity to gain life changing experiences, develop skills that complement their degrees, and make connections from around the globe.

Health and Safety remains a key priority for our work. We are proud to have successfully completed UCL's T100 Lite Health and Safety Accreditation.



Case Study

Developing the next generation of sustainability leaders

Sustainability is a core priority for the Students' Union, and we have launched and expanded a number of key initiatives to help our community make sustainable choices in their daily lives. Initiatives launched this year include:

- our reusable cup scheme where students are rewarded with money off in our cafes for bringing a reusable cup,
- a new resale clothing app to help students sell, rather than throw-away, their old clothes,
- using Oat Milk as default in our cafes to reduce our CO2 footprint,
- introducing new sustainable products such as zero carbon pizza bases and a new option of Toast Beer (made from surplus bread) in our bars, and
- a new Carbon Literacy training scheme for our staff, to empower them to make greener choices.

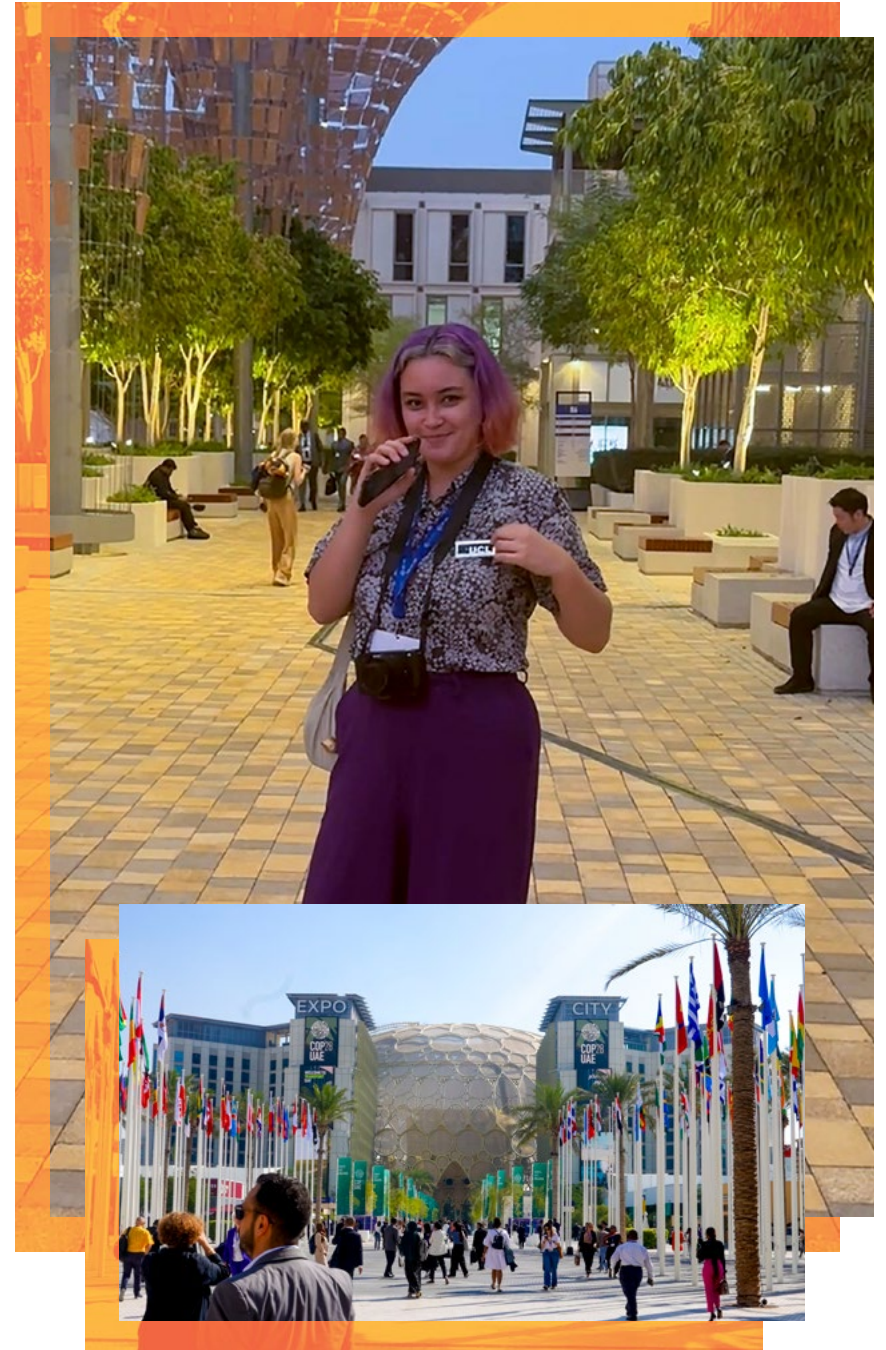
As well as developing sustainability initiatives for today, we're in a unique position to educate and inspire the next generation of leaders who can go out and change the world for the better in the future. For the first time, Students' Union President, Mary McHarg, joined the UCL delegation to COP28 in Dubai. Mary went to COP to elevate the voices of young people and show our student community that they too could make their voices heard on climate change.

WATCH: MARY'S COP28 DIARY



“In November I had the opportunity to go to COP28 with UCL's delegation. It was the first time UCL had sent a student along to the conference, and we hope it won't be the last. I felt a huge responsibility to make sure the voices of our community, and our generation, were represented. I came back with a renewed belief that the people who will change the world for the better are studying in universities like UCL today - and they just need the chance the develop the kind of leadership skills the world so desperately needs.”

Mary McHarg, Students' Union President



On returning from COP 28, Mary led a project to develop the inaugural Sustainability Leadership Conference at UCL. Working closely with colleagues in the Sustainable UCL team, we brought more than 120 student delegates together over two days at UCL East to hear from expert speakers, join panel discussions, and take part in workshops.

The conference aimed to help empower and inspire the next generation of sustainability leaders. More than 80 experts from a wide range of organisations including Greenpeace UK, WWF, ITV, and Lego discussed embedding sustainability in organisational culture, policy-driven sustainability, and innovative approaches. Highlights included discussions on global biodiversity, reducing fossil fuel dependency, and sustainable food systems.

“It was a privilege to attend the conference and meet so many inspiring people committed to climate action. I left feeling empowered to make change in my own way, and I am reassured knowing that there is a vast community committed to this cause.”

Student delegate

We’re committed to make education on environmental sustainability and climate change part of every student’s experience here, and the Sustainability Leadership Conference is just the beginning.



Looking Forward

Alongside the continued delivery of our ambitious strategy, Making More Happen, the next twelve months is full of opportunities, challenges, and new initiatives.

Work on our long-term ambition to find a new permanent home for Students' Union UCL is picking up speed with a scoping project to develop a new Students' Union building under-way.

Our Arts programme is set to expand significantly over the next twelve months with more time allocated for student shows in the Bloomsbury Theatre & Studio next year. This will include an extra week in the Bloomsbury Theatre and an entire new season in the Studio Theatre of nine shows, each with 3 evening performances and 3 technical days. The new Studio season enables an accessible central performance pathway for small-scale student-led creative work, a clear pathway for new ideas and more diverse storytelling, an expansion of student opportunities to the Bloomsbury Theatre facilities, and a more cohesive arts offer for all audiences, and the branding of a 'season' of student-led performances. We are bolstering producer training, tech support and professional support structures/processes to enable this. We will also launch our refurbished Music Practice Rooms with new pianos, as well as two new silent pianos for use in existing rehearsal rooms financed by a generous donation. We will also be expanding our work in intercultural engagement, volunteering and many other areas too.

At UCL East, after undertaking consultation with students, we have begun to redevelop our convenience store space and transform it into a multi-purpose activity space and mini-gym. This will enable our increasingly popular low-commitment physical activity programme to take place in a purpose built and suitable environment.





We're expecting to face new challenges in the year ahead as the central Bloomsbury campus is redeveloped as part of the UCL200 legacy works. This transformation will create a truly extraordinary space in the heart of London, and we've contributed every step of the way to develop the architectural vision for a space that is equal to UCL's global standing. However, in the short-term the forthcoming academic year will see new challenges for our growing student activities programme with the pressure on space increasing significantly.

A new team of student leaders will take up their roles in the summer. Our new Sabbatical Officer team are looking forward to continuing to develop and grow our services for students, and putting student priorities at the heart of decision making at UCL.





KING CHARLES III

MARROW 2024 LEGACY

The Best of EastEnders

THE UNOFFICIAL SIMS COOKBOOK

MUCCI
MAMUCL

Hey you,
fancy
saving
lives?

MARROW
ANTHONY MCKAY
KOLAN

CINCY TEAM

EMPEROR

Riddell

U

Impact Report

2023-24

 **STUDENTS'**
UNION UCL

25 Gordon Street
London, WC1H 0AY

studentsunionucl.org