

What Do Students Value Most?

Student Choice Awards 2022



Introduction

The role that staff play in contributing to an outstanding education in UCL should never go unrecognised. Whether it is a personal tutor offering pastoral or professional guidance, a member of departmental staff who engages in effective partnerships with students, a member of support staff who makes student experience smoother, a teacher who invigorates students through their passion for the subject matter, or an inspiring member of staff, these relationships can make a huge difference to students' UCL experience.

The Union has now been running our awards for UCL staff for a decade, and in 2022 we received 933 nominations for the awards, covering 503 staff members from 74 UCL departments and professional services. Staff received nominations across nine categories, including a new award category for this year on Sustainable Education. For the 2022 awards, the nomination texts submitted totalled over 92,000 words, with an average of almost 100 words per nomination.

Each section of this report summarises these nomination texts, highlighting any common themes of excellent practice that drew particular attention. The report seeks to raise awareness of what students value within their UCL education, providing a blueprint for what staff across the institution can do to play their part in improving students' experiences of teaching, learning and support at UCL. While it remains crucial to highlight areas of improvement within education at UCL, it is also equally important to highlight examples of excellence within the UCL community that students have loved.

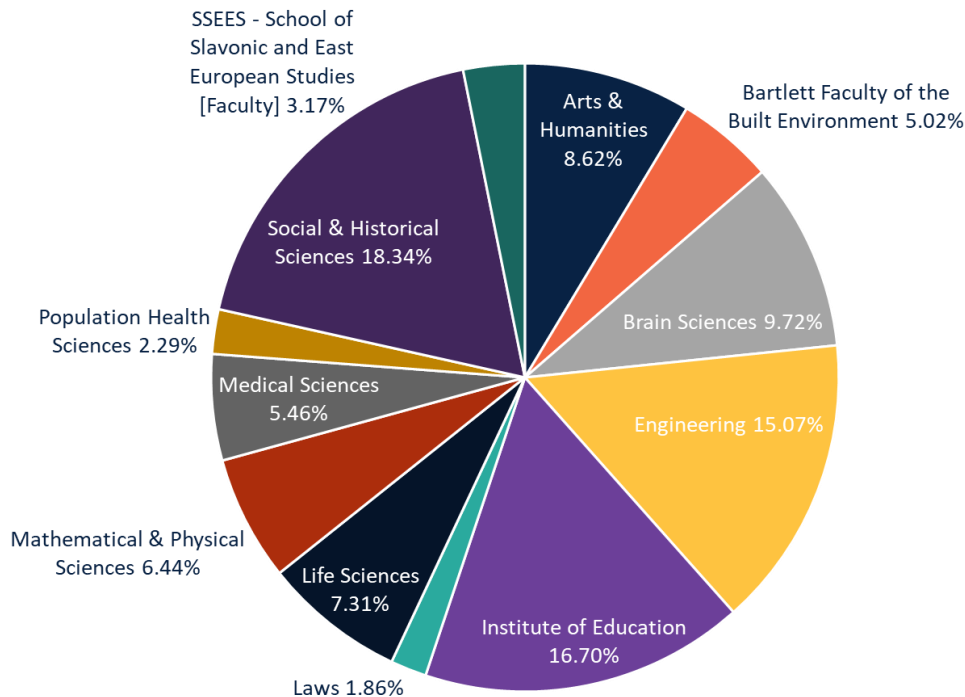
We hope this report will be informative for all those who read it, and that it will play a small part in helping to spread these examples of best-practice across the UCL community. Most important of all, to every member of staff who has inspired a student to write in and tell us how brilliant they are – **thank you.**

**938 nominations for
503 members of staff**

Nominations by Award Category

Faculty	2022 Nominations	2021 Nominations	% Change
Active Student Partnership	94	91	3.30%
Amazing Support Staff	101	265	-61.89%
Brilliant Research-Based Education	51	62	-17.74%
Diverse & Inclusive Education	32	29	10.34%
Excellent Personal Tutoring	165	307	-46.25%
Exceptional Feedback	77	137	-43.80%
Inspiring Teaching Delivery	343	462	-25.76%
Outstanding Research Supervision	68	129	-47.29%
Sustainable Education	7	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	938	1482	N/A

Nominations by Faculty



Nominations by Faculty

Faculty	2022 Nominations	2021 Nominations	% Change	% of Total Nominations
Arts & Humanities	79	159	-50.31%	8.62%
Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment	46	230	-80.00%	5.02%
Brain Sciences	89	113	-21.24%	9.72%
Engineering	138	116	18.97%	15.07%
Institute of Education	153	216	-29.17%	16.70%
Laws	17	11	54.55%	1.86%
Life Sciences	67	53	26.42%	7.31%
Mathematical & Physical Sciences	59	82	-28.05%	6.44%
Medical Sciences	50	98	-48.98%	5.46%
Population Health Sciences	21	131	-83.97%	2.29%
Social & Historical Sciences	168	219	-23.29%	18.34%
SSEES	29	0	N/A	3.17%
TOTAL	916	1,428	-35.85	100.00%

Nominations by Faculty – Student

Faculty	Students	% of UCL Population	2022 Students per Nomination	2021 Students per Nomination
Arts & Humanities	3,637	7.60%	46.0	23.1
Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment	4,011	8.38%	87.2	40.2
Brain Sciences	3,577	7.47%	40.2	15.3
Engineering	7,595	15.86%	55.0	66.2
Institute of Education	6,280	13.12%	41.0	32.5
Laws	1,231	2.57%	72.4	102.5
Life Sciences	4,045	8.45%	60.4	71.0
Mathematical & Physical Sciences	5,114	10.68%	86.7	62.9
Medical Sciences	4,021	8.40%	80.4	38.4
Population Health Sciences	1,537	3.21%	73.2	11.5
Social & Historical Sciences	5,683	11.87%	33.8	29.3
SSEES	1,153	2.41%	39.8	N/A
TOTAL	47,884	100.00%	52.3	33.7

Active Student Partnership

“She is very in-touch with student concerns, understanding, and fully supportive for any issues that students may have. The entire cohort are very impressed with not only her kindness and understanding nature for student wellbeing, but her excellent module delivery. The modules she leads are very well taught and engaging, and she encourages student interaction. Her explanations are always clear and...always answers questions to the upmost of quality. She is empathetic for student voice and delivers amazing quality teaching.”

The award for Active Student Partnership recognises staff who are committed to listening to and working with students and their representatives to improve and change education in their module, programme, or department. It recognises staff who both listen attentively and act on student feedback, take responsibility for problems, and proactively involve students in addressing issues and finding solutions.

Students highlighted staff who were responsive and flexible when dealing with student feedback, making changes to be implemented quickly. Those staff members who were proactive in seeking student feedback and who were supportive when it was received were also singled out for praise, and many student nominators described how this made them and others on their cohort feel empowered in their learning.

Staff who were seen as inclusive in their partnership with students were particularly appreciated, with international students and students of colour both praising staff members who helped them deal with issues they faced as members of these student groups. Some of the most compelling nominations described staff members as collaborative and empathetic to students concerns, which made these staff members more approachable when students wished to deliver other feedback.

Amazing Support Staff

“He was a caring, professional, and responsive person at UCL. He helped me follow my enquiry, chased progress on my behalf, kept me updated and gave me good, practical advice that helped me find a resolution. He is a fantastic example of a committed, accountable member of staff who puts students first. He delivered an excellent student experience when I was experiencing a stressful time. I am grateful to him. This kind of support often gets overlooked but I believe the value can’t be overstated. It’s the day-to-day administrative care (even in the face of some pretty inflexible institutional systems) that keeps students engaged and able to study.”

The award for Amazing Support Staff thanks staff who are not in teaching roles but still make a huge difference to students’ learning at UCL through help, patience, and care. The award recognises staff members who show an active interest in helping students get the most out of their learning, provide advice and guidance to students, and clearly and consistently communicate practical advice and opportunities.

As in previous years, nominations came in for a wide range of roles – administrators, admissions officers, technicians, and others – and the award showcases how important these staff members are in supporting students during their academic journey.

Nominations for this award highlighted support staff who went above and beyond to help students with both academic and non-academic issues. Students often saw these staff as their main point of support for their experience at UCL and were grateful for their openness and knowledge.

In addition, students also expressed appreciation for staff who were easy to contact and responsive to their issues, as well as those members of support staff who were proactive in checking in with them regarding their academic progress as well as their overall wellbeing.

Brilliant Research-Based Education

“He delivered an inspiring curriculum, which was based on the latest research and thinking along with a deep understanding of what has come before and how it is relevant to recent research. Every week was well-researched, fresh, and inspiring. An inclusive teaching style meant all students were encouraged to join the discussion and to develop their thinking and arguments. Amazing guest speakers and an opportunity to catch up in an informal zoom to discuss latest blogs provided even more opportunities to learn and engage. I very much valued the opportunity to do formative assessment, as a mature student who has been away from education for some time the feedback was invaluable.”

The award for Brilliant Research-Based Education is for staff who educate students about the latest, cutting-edge knowledge, or who enable taught students to create knowledge by conducting their own research. The award recognises staff members who provide students with insights into emerging knowledge and issues of the future, enable students to learn through conducting their own research, and provide supporting materials to help students explore the frontiers of knowledge and produce exciting and innovative research.

Within this category students praised staff members who developed well-researched and interesting curriculums based on the latest development in the field. Nominations also highlighted staff who provided students with further advice and encouragement to explore research-based topics further in their own research and inquiry.

Students also appreciated staff who adapted their research-based education to inform both technical and non-technical students within a subject, fostering an atmosphere of openness whilst also challenging students on their understanding of the topic and research at hand.

Most Valued Practice

Incorporated cutting-edge content into teaching

Nominations highlighted staff-members who ensured that their taught content was up-to-date, bringing in the latest research, perspectives and innovations to keep students informed.

“Her lectures are always based on the latest, cutting-edge research and writing. This encourages students to question preconceptions they may have held that have only recently begun to be challenged.”

Encouraged further research and debate

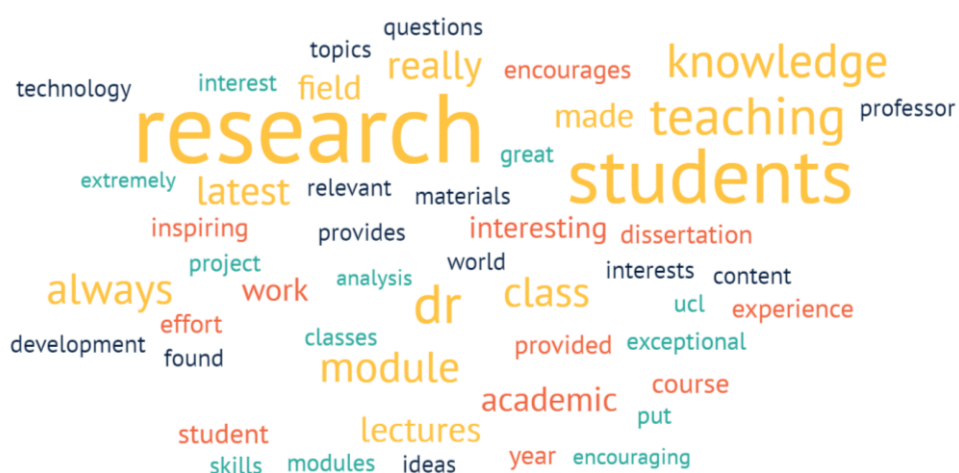
Students appreciated staff members whose research-based education stimulated further discussion, providing a springboard for students to conduct their own research.

“The module was the most challenging module I took at UCL, and I was pushed to my limits to challenge myself and conduct my own research.”

Linked taught content to students’ own research

Students also praised teaching staff who linked their research-based education to the research students themselves were conducting, helping them to further explore their dissertations or other research projects.

“Whenever he taught a chapter which he felt was relevant to one student’s dissertation or research interests, he would call the student’s attention to the topic.”



Diverse & Inclusive Education

“She is committed to a person-centred, co-constructed and empowering approach in both her teaching and numerous research activities. In doing so she is raising the voices of marginalised groups, particularly the neurodiverse community, to ensure that they are collaborators, rather than participants in research. She is committed to having a real life rather than academic only impact, and I can see that this takes additional time, energy, and commitment to achieve, but it also means the work that she completes is transferred into practice, and to the professionals who work in and with these communities.”

The award for Diverse & Inclusive Education highlights staff members who work to ensure their curriculum or research recognises marginalised scholars and shines a light on diverse perspectives. This award recognises staff members delivering curricula that have a truly global perspective, making active efforts to incorporate the voices of a diverse range of scholars, including non-European voices, into students’ learning, as well as sharing knowledge with students that crosses cultural boundaries.

Nominations highlighted staff members who embedded issues of equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion into both the curriculum and the wider learning community, maintaining honesty and open reflection on the subject matter at hand. Students appreciated when these subjects were approached with sensitivity and nuance, offering a voice to a wide range of perspectives, especially those that are often marginalised elsewhere.

Students also praised staff who considered ideas of diversity and inclusion whilst recognising the inherent power dynamics within their own subject matter and society at large, bringing to the forefront ideas that were not Eurocentric and that recognise different voices such as non-white, LGBTQ, female, disabled and neurodiverse authors and academics.

Most Valued Practice

Created a respectful environment

Students expressed appreciation for staff members who allowed students to express themselves and pass on their experiences in a safe and understanding environment, allowing them to feel respected both for their own personal background and their viewpoint on a particular subject.

“She is very sensitive to issues of race and different lived experiences of her students, and she ensures her students feel comfortable expressing themselves in the classroom and one-on-one settings.”

Integrated diverse and inclusive content throughout the curriculum

Nominations also highlighted staff who put issues of equality, diversity, and inclusion at the forefront of their taught content, integrating such themes throughout the module or programme rather than mentioning them in passing.

“Issues of global justice and power were not just featured as segments but shaped every part of the course both theoretically and on applied issues.”

Approached issues with nuance and care

Students were thankful of staff who were delicate and thoughtful in their approach to sensitive subjects, ensuring the material could be covered in a comprehensive but empathetic manner.

“She is careful to highlight and nuance approaching issues such as disabled voices and ‘civilising’ discourse around women and queer communities in ways that reveal her own passion and care for these topics.”



Excellent Personal Tutoring

“Whenever students feel insecure in their studies or face hardships in their personal lives, they know they can turn to him for guidance and great advice that isn’t sugar coated, but actually works. I cannot even count the number of students who wanted to drop out of their course, and changed their minds after just a chat with him. During the pandemic, he has been a great reassurance for all the students who felt lost, depressed, or completely burned out. He is always immediately reachable for any question we have, always with the greatest empathy. His positive attitude and passion for his job are continuously inspiring his students and tutees.”

The award for Excellent Personal Tutoring recognises members of staff who are always there to provide students with pastoral support and academic guidance. The award seeks to highlight staff members who take an active interest in students’ lives, establish positive relationships with students based on mutual trust and respect, and contribute to the academic, personal, and professional development of students.

Nominations highlighted staff members who effectively combined both academic and pastoral support, fostered warm and productive relationships with their tutees, and were approachable and present throughout their academic experience. Many students praised staff members who built trust with the students they tutored, using empathy as well as their own experience and expertise to reassure them.

Additionally, students praised tutors who offered solutions and constructive feedback without being prescriptive, giving students advice whilst also allowing them to make their own decisions. The tutors who integrated knowledge of UCL support services, as well as career opportunities both within and outside the UCL community, received particularly glowing feedback.

Exceptional Feedback

“She always provided useful, constructive, and detailed suggestions on my assignment writing, and extremely specific explanations for these suggestions. As an international student I encounter many difficulties, such as language problems in academic writing. When I received her feedback, I was shocked by the length (in some cases the word counts almost surpassed my own writing) and how detailed it was. In the suggestions, she corrected my word choices with specific explanations, and guided me to use succinct and clear expressions in my writing.”

The award for Exceptional Feedback is aimed at staff who provide constructive and useful feedback on students’ assessment and learning, helping students to progress and succeed. The award recognises staff members who provide tailored written or verbal feedback designed to support students as individuals, give timely feedback which enables reflection and improvement in advance of future learning opportunities, and provide either detailed feedback or the opportunity to discuss work in order to maximise students’ learning and development.

Students appreciated staff members who put a concerted effort into the feedback they provided, especially when this feedback was offered in a kind and constructive tone. As in previous editions of this report, nominations also highlighted staff members who offered detailed personalised feedback in a timely manner, with constructive ideas of how students can improve. Finally, students praised staff members whose feedback was evidence-based, referencing marking rubrics or published research, which often provided students with a springboard for further study as well as improving their grasp of a subject.

Most Valued Practice

Provided detailed and specific feedback

Students praised staff members whose feedback was comprehensive, covering individual areas in which they could improve, leaving no stone unturned in outlining ways they could do better in future assignments.

“His feedback was filled with precious insights and in-text edits on how to improve in many aspects including contents, logical flow, English writing, style and bibliography.”

Offered springboards for the future

Students also appreciate those members of staff whose feedback offered insights and inspiration for future avenues of study, guiding them towards new areas of research that might interest them.

“She regularly recommends useful and pertinent sources and references for further reading, which have been extremely helpful in the development of my methodology (among other aspects of my PhD).”

Gave timely feedback

Nominations highlighted staff whose feedback was delivered in a prompt manner, especially following assessments, allowing students to incorporate any feedback received into future learning or assessments as quickly as possible.

“She is incredibly timely in her feedback which enables us to take our time digesting it and discussing it with her before we start working on the assessment.”



Inspiring Teaching Delivery

“Every course, whether language, literature or culture is delivered with enthusiasm, knowledge and passion for the subject: all of the lessons are structured in such a way that they are engaging, and she actively encourages student discussion and participation, giving many students the confidence to voice their opinions or interpretations of literary works for the first time, with confidence. I have noticed that particularly in the literature and culture classes many of her students speak out for the first time at UCL - finding her friendly, open and non-judgemental approach the perfect environment to do so.”

The award for Inspiring Teaching Delivery recognises staff members who deliver exceptional teaching, using innovative and engaging methods to hold students’ interest and help them learn. Staff members who are recognised inspire and engage their audience, are happy to diverge from the script to help students’ learn and create a supportive teaching environment in which students feel confident to speak up and are unafraid of being wrong.

Students value staff members whose passion for the subject matter shines through in their teaching, and nominations highlighted how this enthusiasm was contagious amongst their cohorts, as well as helped these students better grasp the material. Nominations also praised staff members who created an open and inclusive learning environment where contributions were welcomed from everyone present.

Additionally, nominations demonstrated students’ preference for flexible and accessible learning, particularly as some teaching has remained online during this academic year. Whether online or in-person, students preferred teaching that was delivered using a variety of sources, as well as various teaching methods designed to maximise their grasp of the material and understand different perspectives.

Outstanding Research Supervision

“No question or idea is ever stupid in her eyes, and in conjunction with constant encouragement, this has minimised common barriers faced by early career researchers such as imposter syndrome. Our conversations about research are a two-way street, which involves the element of listening and building upon my ideas through her guidance and expertise. She puts me in a position to succeed using my own abilities, an essential step to self-development as a researcher. While my thesis topic keeps me engaged and motivated, it is her supervision style that makes me love what I do.”

The award for Outstanding Research Supervision recognises staff who help postgraduate research students to succeed, with a balance in providing support and fostering independence. The award highlights supervisors or other staff members who are flexible and prepared to go the extra mile to support students, encourage students to contribute substantially to their specific discipline, are exceptionally supportive in planning assessments and the PhD viva, and offer constructive employment and career advice.

Nominations praised staff members who were approachable in their supervision, striking a balance between fostering independent study whilst also being present throughout the student’s research journey. Students also appreciated supervisors whose support covered the entirety of the PhD programme, from developing their thesis to submission and viva.

The highest quality nominations were for supervisors whose support extended to helping students with the advancement of their careers, offering sound advice on their future profession, as well as helping them find development opportunities within and outside of academia.

Sustainable Education

“She has led the way towards integrating the newest compulsory module, Anthropological Research Methods, into sustainability across different quantitative and qualitative methods. This was a great way to embed it into our programme while keeping the interest of people within their chosen research streams. I have to say that this was lacking before, outside of my chosen modules, and it managed to highlight how our education in anthropology can be further embedded into critical issues such as sustainability. I hope this effort goes on!”

The award for Sustainable Education recognises staff who are leading the way in embedding sustainability into the curriculum and shaping our future climate leaders. This new award for 2022 highlights staff members who make active efforts to demonstrate the link between the subject matter and sustainability, embed issues of sustainability into life at UCL, and offer students the opportunity to link their learning to real world problems and situations related to sustainability.

The nominations received highlighted students’ appreciation for staff who were providing opportunities to get involved in sustainability work taking place within the department, as well as bringing students and staff members together for sustainability initiatives.

However, due to the limited number of nominations received for the award this year, it is not possible to extract themes from the nomination texts as we have done for the other awards.

A Final Thanks

Once again, thank you to every member of staff who has inspired a student to write in and tell us how brilliant they are – **your impact on our community does not go unnoticed.**

Student Choice Awards

25 Gordon Street
London
Wc1H 0AY

 **STUDENTS'
UNION UCL**