UCL

**2022 – 2027
UCL Strategic Plan**

Publication date: 31 October 2022

Draft Strategic Plan

Foreword

UCL is an extraordinary place, filled with people with a hunger for excellence and strong creative drive. Over the last decade, these qualities have accelerated our rise into the ranks of the very best universities in the world. We consistently demonstrate research power and impact at the highest level and are fortunate to educate students of impressive talent and ambition from around the world. The university's long-term strategy, *UCL 2034*, has given us a framework for these achievements, and its objectives still resonate for our work. We are enjoying the rewards of our creativity and commitment, and we have the capability to push still further.

While this is therefore not the time for a significant change in direction, after a ten-year period of growth we need to evolve how we work so that we can meet immediate financial and other challenges and sustain success for the long-term. UCL has been propelled forward by individual and small-group endeavour. Where this has been directed at new academic activity, it has mostly been very fruitful but it has also resulted in new administrative services, systems and processes, and our university has become a maze of complex, fragmented, and often overlapping administration. The consultation has demonstrated how much potential and enthusiasm there is for new academic initiatives at the local level – witness the many projects put forward for consideration for investment – but it has also shown how frustrating and time-consuming many find it to navigate the complexity of UCL, as well as dissatisfaction with the quality of the physical working environment in some parts of the university.

In this strategic plan, we set out a programme of consolidation. Rather than attempting to define or direct the academic life of the university, this plan for institutional-level activity focuses on reworking the structures on which our academic success depends. We will invest in our programme of Grand Challenges to enhance our institutional impact, both externally and internally; we will ensure transparency in our decision-making, including investment for the future; we will drive change in education, simplifying where we can in the interests of staff and students; and we will prioritise a comprehensive programme of service improvements to create a high-quality environment for our world-class research and education.

Rethinking our ways of working seemed necessary when we began the consultation process at the start of the 2021-22 academic year. Against a backdrop of rising inflation, financial uncertainty and geopolitical instability, it is now urgent. Like other organisations facing a period of deep, externally driven change, we must use our considerable resources wisely to put us in the best possible position for the long-term. By focusing on a smaller number of priorities and being as efficient as possible, we can free up resource for what matters most: supporting staff and students so they can do their best work. This will require a new mindset and a shared approach to change, with deep cooperation between local academic units and university-wide services, close attention to local needs (especially those of academic staff and students), and a whole-institution approach to efficiencies of scale. It will also require a robust financial strategy and an estates strategy that is agreed and understood widely across our community.

Our institutional values must underpin the delivery of this strategic plan. By changing how we are organised and how we work together, we aim to create an environment that enables academic rigour and intellectual innovation to thrive in our community. We will take forward our reforms in a transparent and consultative manner and establish clear lines of accountability across the university. In all that we do, we will be seeking to build

connection, bringing people together in shared endeavour, mutual regard and trust. The outcome of this strategic plan must be a better working and learning environment for all.

The discussion, debate and feedback through this consultation process has been inspiring, and reflects the views of internal and external members of the UCL community. The profusion of ideas coming forward – not only in terms of academic priorities, but also in what we can and should be in the future as a globally-leading university rooted in London, one of the world's great cities – speak not just to the next five years but long into the future. I look forward to continuing the conversation that we have begun through this consultation process and drawing on our university's collective creativity and capability for problem-solving to deliver on the commitments set out in this plan.

Dr Michael Spence

President & Provost

Vision, mission and values

Our vision and mission were developed as part of *UCL 2034* – a 20-year strategy for the university.

This Strategic Plan aims to build on the trajectory established by that process and the framework to which it gave rise. Its development has taken place in the context of an ongoing commitment to the vision and mission set out in *UCL 2034*, together with the evolution of a coherent set of values to guide our work in achieving them.

Vision

Our distinctive approach to research, education and innovation will further inspire our community of staff, students and partners to transform how the world is understood, how knowledge is created and shared and the way that global problems are solved.

Mission

London's Global University: a diverse intellectual community, engaged with the wider world and committed to changing it for the better; recognised for our radical and critical thinking and its widespread influence; with an outstanding ability to integrate our education, research, innovation and enterprise for the long-term benefit of humanity.

Values

Through consultation, we have, as a community, endorsed four value clusters that will underpin our work to realise this strategic plan:

• Integrity and mutual accountability

• Openness and inclusion

• Care and respect

• Rigour and innovation

The initiatives set out below have been developed to resonate with these values and to evolve our institutional culture where our community consultation has indicated that this should be prioritised.

Introduction

In *UCL 2034*, published in 2014 as a 20-year strategy for the university, we described ourselves as 'London's Global University', with a clear mission to act for the long-term benefit of humanity.

That description is an evolution of our foundational narrative. Since 1826, we have challenged orthodoxy and applied ourselves to making the world better, seeking to serve society through the generation and application of 'useful' knowledge, with a particular focus on leading interdisciplinary discussion and debate. UCL is now one of the world's top universities, with broad disciplinary excellence in research, innovation, education and impact. We operate on a large scale and nevertheless deliver exceptional academic performance: an achievement that has few parallels internationally. We are also a significant contributor to London and to the UK, generating close to £10bn of economic impact each year. In all this, we strive to exemplify the strong entrepreneurial spirit and desire for equity and justice that inspired our founding.

We have spent this last year in consultation, considering how to maximise our strengths and address those areas where we need to improve. We are already contributing at the highest level to the resolution of questions of real international significance, and the consultation feedback makes clear a collective desire to build this capability further, focusing on areas such as the climate crisis, inequity and mental health. There is strong support for looking again at our education provision, particularly with a view to addressing the pressures of workload reported by staff and students alike; and for a clear and transparent programme of long-term investment in our academic priorities for the future. There is also agreement that we need to target improvements in services, systems and processes in key areas such as research services and HR, and to think about how we can leverage these improvements to free up time for research, education and high-level support for the academic mission.

Achieving such aims is never straightforward, but is particularly challenging in this period, with escalating geopolitical and financial instability and real urgency around actions for sustainability and equity. The UK is experiencing considerable economic shocks in the form of double-digit inflation, energy price increases and supply chain constraints. Our major regulated income streams for both education and research are declining in real terms and our overseas student fee income faces growing risks. We are a large and complex organisation with significant operating costs, and we live in a time of increasing global competition. Our strategic plan must therefore deliver on our priorities in a manner that controls our costs effectively now so that we can invest for the future, and that ensures we are spending our money where it can have the most impact, including by ensuring that we can afford to reward our staff competitively.

Over the next five years, and by 2027, we plan to have:

- amplified our ability to coordinate and build upon our research and education strengths, and our own operations, in five areas of significant societal challenge

- streamlined our education offering for the benefit of staff and students, with a new programme architecture and a new structure for the teaching year and reduced the impact of structural complexity on the workloads of our staff

- better coordinated our support for all involved in education

- invested in those administrative functions that make the greatest difference to our institutional success, with demonstrable improvements in the time staff and students spend on administrative and transactional work

- demonstrated clear progress towards an institutional culture of openness and inclusion, including by creating the conditions that enable difficult, sensitive and important questions to be discussed and navigated collectively

- delivered long-term financial resilience, with transparent planning for investment in academic areas of promise.

About this Plan

This draft Strategic Plan has been developed following extensive consultation, discussion and engagement. Consultation began in October 2021, and we have published seven discussion papers over the past year. These discussion papers have been viewed more than 14,000 times on the consultation SharePoint site and discussed in a series of Town Halls that have been attended, on average, by more than 500 people each time. We have also run a series of student-facing consultation events in which 538 students actively participated.

We have received more than 420 feedback submissions from individuals, departments, faculties, special interest groups, professional staff groups and research domains, representing more than 6,500 people [1].

The success of our strategic plan will be determined by the UCL community, and we are grateful to everyone who took the time to respond to the consultation. To acknowledge the considerable time invested by UCL colleagues and to summarise how their feedback has shaped the plan, we have collated it in the Consultation Report[2]. We hope it is clear from that document that we have sought to distil consensus from that feedback into what follows.

Feedback submissions and thematic summaries have been shared with the authors of the discussion papers and those involved in drafting the strategic plan itself. Summaries of feedback received on specific academic proposals, and suggested iterations to the proposals, have been shared with relevant committees to help shape recommendations for inclusion in the Strategic Plan. Suggestions for change or new activity have been categorised according to whether they related specifically to the initiatives included in the draft Strategic Plan or to wider continuous improvement activities as part of business-as-usual, so that the appropriate channel for action or response is identified.

The year-long period of consultation has unleashed a huge amount of creative energy throughout the university. We will keep the conversation going so this plan remains responsive to a rapidly changing environment, and will pilot new approaches to strategy implementation, including scenario planning, prototyping, rapid testing, and innovation in delivery. We will use these approaches to experiment with what works and what does not, discarding the latter and building on the former.

Our Strategic Plan is organised around two key sections, each broadly aligned with the sequence of the papers published throughout the consultation process. First, we set out several academic priorities, together with plans to focus our resources and time on activities that directly facilitate our future academic excellence in research and education (both broadly defined).

The areas within our academic priorities are:

• UCL's Grand Challenges Programme

• A futures-focused approach to education

• Targeting investment in our academic endeavours.

Second, we describe our enabling priorities, including plans for targeted work on services and systems that will address long-standing structural and process issues, and provide the framework

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1   Some groups and individuals submitted multiple responses and therefore this number is greater than the number of unique individuals involved.
2   https://liveuclac.sharepoint.com/sites/UCL-strategic-plan-2022-27/SitePages/The-Conversation-so-far.aspx

within which we can fund our activities. These are:

• A new financial strategy

• Size and shape

• Service improvement

• Living our values.

For each delivery area, we define our aims and set out initiatives towards achieving those aims over the next five years. Given the timeframe for the strategy, these initiatives are at various stages of development, with some now ready for immediate action and others planned for launch within the five-year period. The status of each initiative has been indicated throughout the plan.

A final section sets out how we will deliver the plan and monitor our progress, including holding ourselves to account through key performance indicators (KPIs). Ensuring that everyone can track progress and hold delivery teams to account will be important throughout the period covered by the plan.

The funding for the strategic plan will be determined by our financial strategy. A costed implementation plan is in development and will be shared with the community once the financial strategy is confirmed.

Academic priorities

The strength of an institution such as UCL has been, and will always remain, the excellence of the education and research that goes on in our departments and faculties.

It is a deep commitment to disciplinary excellence, and to creating space for the disciplines to innovate, that has placed us amongst the world's leading universities. Over the period of this strategic plan and beyond, our core commitment remains empowering departments and faculties to pursue excellence in their education and research, and to do so with their external and internal partners and collaborators. For that reason, it is important that local departments and faculties continue to set their own academic strategy.

Within that core commitment, however, there are three contexts in which setting institution-wide academic priorities is appropriate. The first is that UCL has, and should continue, a tradition of investing in 'Grand' Challenges; areas in which the coordination of, and investment in, issues-based work across faculties and departments enables us to capitalise upon our disciplinary excellence in work that cuts across disciplinary boundaries. This builds upon our excellence and creates an important entry point into the work of the university for communities seeking answers to the complex challenges of the modern world. At a time when the social licence to operate of British universities is being challenged, the importance of this latter consideration cannot be overstated.

The second context is that our students often engage in the teaching activity of more than one department or faculty and, in any case, have a right to expect certain standards of a UCL education, standards for which we are externally accountable as an institution. Moreover, much of the administration of our education offering takes place at the institutional level, as well as that of the department and faculty.

Third, there are times when investment needs to be made in a particular academic discipline beyond that which might reasonably be expected of a department or faculty itself. In that context, the institution needs to regularly review candidates for investment (as we have as part of this strategy consultation process), and to outline a principled approach to deciding between them (as we do below).

i) Grand Challenges

We have a long tradition of applying our cutting-edge research in pursuit of solutions to the world's most pressing problems, and of doing this collaboratively across discipline boundaries. The Grand Challenges programme, conceived over a decade ago at UCL and emulated at many other institutions, acknowledged the strength of this impulse at a grassroots level, and provided seed-funding for collaboration and early-stage research ideas. The momentum of that programme has accelerated over time, and its impact was evident through the consultation process.

Our Strategic Plan now evolves the initial ambition into a more established programme of five academically-led Grand Challenges. In keeping with our institutional values of rigour and innovation, they will drive investment in faculties and departments that supports new areas of research and provide a framework through which our decision-making on related themes can be shaped by the expertise of our academic community.

Importantly, each of these Challenges will also be pursued, not only as a collaborative venture across the university, but in partnership with our existing academic and community partners. For example, in that each Grand Challenge is likely to raise questions of human health, we are fortunate to be at the heart of a vibrant life sciences ecosystem that includes leading NHS Trusts such as UCLH, the Royal Free London, Great Ormond Street Hospital, Moorfields Eye Hospital, the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore and the Whittington

NHS Trust. These centres of excellence are not only crucial partners in our globally leading work in health itself, but will also, like many other external organisations, be crucial to the development of our Grand Challenges agenda.

Following extensive consultation and discussion with our community, five areas have been selected. They are areas in which we have distinctive academic strengths and in which there is enthusiasm in our academic community for the better coordination of our work. By investing further in working across disciplinary boundaries we will further augment our academic excellence, empower joint working of academic and professional services colleagues and create a positive impact on the world. The five areas are:

- The Climate Crisis

- Mental health and well-being

- Data-empowered societies

- Inequalities

- Intercultural communication

We will now extend the scope of each Grand Challenge to empower networking across not just research but all that we do:

- **Research:** Grand Challenges will allow us to channel investment for collaboration, debate and experimentation in departments and faculties into these key interdisciplinary areas of enquiry. A proportion of funds will be set aside, as now, for seed funding, distributed competitively to stimulate emerging areas of research and knowledge transfer

- **Education:** a pilot online learning programme will be costed and a business plan created for each of the Grand Challenge themes. We will explore whether this can be provided in non-traditional formats (e.g. modular credits), can be offered in interesting combinations and made available to audiences beyond those already at UCL. We will ensure any new teaching material assets are available to existing students as well as to those enrolling on fully distance learning programmes. We will also seek to create space for some new study opportunities in the Grand Challenges themes throughout our curriculum as part of our review of both our programme architecture and the structure

of our academic teaching year.

- **Operations:** each Grand Challenge theme will inform how we operate as an institution and a community, allowing us to draw on our research expertise as we determine how best to respond to questions of equity and sustainability. This will entail close working between the teams responsible for our Sustainability Strategy and our Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Strategy and the Grand Challenges leads in those areas. The Challenges will also provide a clear framework for securing advice and consultancy from our experts on questions such as our internal use of data; our support for the mental health and wellbeing of staff and students; and how we ensure diverse voices are heard in institutional conversations.

Each Grand Challenge will have an identified academic lead. Their remit will be to foster collaboration, kick-start new research, innovation and education initiatives, and ensure that our institutional expertise is consistently brought to bear in decision-making on these key issues. They will be embedded in a department or faculty relevant to their disciplinary expertise and will channel investment into academic departments and faculties that network and empower colleagues. We will therefore put in place a steering committee for each Grand Challenge, and there will also be funding associated with each programme; the consultation paper suggested this would be in the region of £1m per challenge per year over five years. The final amount will be determined in the wider context of our financial strategy once this strategic plan is finalised.

Our institutional readiness to engage with these Grand Challenges varies, and this is reflected in the timeline for the expansion of the programme over the next five years, as follows:

Delivery Area sponsors: Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation, and Global Engagement) and Vice-Provost (Health)		
	Year 1	**Years 2-5**
Ready for implementation	• Recruit academic leads into relevant faculties/departments for the Grand Challenge of Climate Change and the Grand Challenge of Mental Health in 2023	• Recruit academic leads into relevant faculties/departments for Grand Challenges of Data empowered societies, Inequalities, Intercultural communication. • Implement and review Grand Challenge governance structure • Deliver Climate Change and Mental Health projects • Deliver Grand Challenges projects for Data empowered societies, Inequalities, Intercultural communication
Developmental initiatives	• Scope Grand Challenge of Climate Change and Grand Challenge of Mental Health with plan through to 2027 • Design Grand Challenges support and governance structure	• Scope Grand Challenges of Data empowered societies, Inequalities, Intercultural communication and any further Grand Challenges for sequential launch

ii) A futures-focused approach to education

The second delivery area focuses on the education that we offer our students and their broader experience. We acknowledged in consultation that we have undoubted strengths and excellent practice across the university, but also that we are not yet consistently meeting the needs and expectations of our students. Significant numbers of staff report excessive workloads and high administrative costs for processes that ought to be straightforward. We have made steady progress over the last ten years and the efforts of dedicated staff in departments has seen us begin to turn the tide on a period of low student satisfaction scores. To accelerate that process, it is time to look more fundamentally at the structures and ways of working that have built up incrementally. There are real opportunities here: by thinking more fundamentally about how our curriculum operates, we can create space for interdisciplinary project working, delivered at scale. By freeing staff of administrative tasks, we create more time for students and teachers to work together on a curriculum that will genuinely prepare students for the changing world, and for student advisers and departmental pastoral staff to engage more directly with those requiring support.

Our proposed Student Life Strategy will see work in partnership with Students' Union UCL to deliver an expanded programme of extra-curricular activities, and create an opening, welcoming and inspiring campus that brings students together wherever possible. An institution prioritising care and respect needs to address the complexity that drives excessive workloads for its students and staff; an institution that strives to be open and inclusive needs to make space for students to capitalise on all that we – and London – can offer. Both are priorities for this strategic plan.

There was strong support for a substantial programme of structural change through the consultation process. Respondents made clear the overall scale of ambition for maintaining the quality of education at UCL and improving further, with an emphasis on reducing the administrative burden on all parties, particularly in the interests of student and staff wellbeing, and increasing student academic support. The initiatives below are therefore focused on projects that look at the structure of our pedagogic provision and projects that aim to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of the teaching infrastructure.

Of course, wide consultation and collaborative development will continue to be crucial for real structural change to be possible. Academic Board

and Education Committee will have vital roles to play in catalysing those discussions and advising on the feasibility of plans from inception to delivery. Education Committee has endorsed the general direction of the education plans and it is noted that, once institutional direction and ambition are clearer following Project One, more detailed project plans can be developed for the other projects (there was widespread support for the second project listed below). A detailed implementation plan is not yet feasible as deliberations continue, but nevertheless, our priorities for undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) education will fall into five broad areas:

- **A UCL teaching and assessment framework:** over the next year, we will agree a set of shared principles for a UCL-distinctive, futures-focused, research-intensive education, which brings our students close to our research to an ever-greater extent. Our aim is a broad institutional framework for education that evolves our UCL Connected Curriculum principles in pragmatic ways, so local determination and interpretation can flourish. This should provide the framework for decisions about future investment in the tools that support our teaching and consider explicitly how we can increase interdisciplinarity in the curriculum and give our students, regardless of discipline, the grounding to navigate, for example, questions of sustainability, data science and carbon reduction, given that this capacity will be increasingly sought by employers;

- **A new Institute for Higher Education (HE) Development and Support:** the aspiration here is to bring together the currently fragmented support for all involved with education at UCL, and to establish an institute that will improve the ability of those who study with us - and those who guide that study - to access high-quality practical information and advice. In particular, we will bring together institutional support for staff development with our support for students' skills development and our careers and employability team, so that their efforts are connected to a greater degree.

- **A revised structure for the academic teaching year by 2026–27:** by looking again at how we structure the teaching year, we can move forward on long-standing concerns from students about over-assessment, a high-stakes end-of-year exam period and the lack of new teaching in Term Three. We can also address the need to better support staff with their education workloads

by spacing the undergraduate year out more consistently and creating opportunities for our UG and PGT students to engage in for-credit projects outside their departments. The principle of a new structure received support in the consultation and from Education Committee but will require careful planning and engagement ahead of implementation, particularly as we consider how different structures can accommodate and enhance local constraints and pedagogies. Working with Education Committee, and in full consultation with the community, our aspiration is to have a revised structure in place for the 2026–27 academic year.

• **Introduce a new programme architecture for UG and PGT courses:** under the guidance of Education Committee, a range of options and accompanying impacts will be identified for further consultation and deliberation. New proposals will address the negative impact of our existing approach to student choice, where most of our modules are available in principle to most of our students, but without the infrastructure to make this theoretical breadth feasible in practice. Where we do manage to offer relative freedom of choice, this happens in ways that can be detrimental to cohort identity and students' sense of belonging. We propose to conduct a full review of the pathways through our taught programmes, simplifying and agreeing the most desirable set of options for each programme so that we are confident that the flexibility and choice we offer students is academically coherent and achievable within campus and other practical constraints. This undertaking will also address existing, ultimately unsustainable, levels of administrative and organisational complexity that create huge frustration and challenging workloads for those teaching and for those engaged in supporting education. Given the scale of the undertaking, our first step is to work up a set of principles for consultation in the 2023–24 academic year, and to phase the next steps in response to that consultation across the strategic plan period.

• **A new Student Life Strategy[3], in partnership with Students' Union UCL:** building on our existing strong relationships with student leaders at all levels of the organisation, we have worked with the Students' Union UCL sabbatical officers to agree a Student Life Strategy. This will set out how we prioritise the co- and extra-curricular elements of the student experience and agree how UCL can facilitate and support student aspirations. This Strategy will sit alongside this strategic plan; it includes:

o the expansion of sports and physical activity facilities and opportunities for students

o the development of the successful artsUCL initiative, with a focus on a major new programme to expand the capacity of the Union to support entry-level mass participation in art, drama, dance and music

o a continued focus on volunteering as a core UCL student activity, with increased opportunities for students to work on research with local organisations through an expanded Community Research Initiative for Students (CRIS) programme

o investment in the infrastructure that supports student-led departmental and subject societies, helping to build student engagement at departmental level;

o increased opportunities for intercultural activities and engagement for students to reflect the diversity of our student community

o proposals for a new home for Students' Union UCL on the Bloomsbury campus; these will be taken through the new investment framework for major institutional projects that support the academic mission (which is set out in more detail below). Although the scale of investment cannot be guaranteed at this stage, the question of space and facilities for the Students' Union must be prioritised if we are to remain attractive for the future.

The initiatives in this education delivery area are summarised in the table below. They are long-term, structural projects that will put us on a new footing. Rather than always seeking incremental improvement, we are planning to tackle some more deep-rooted problems in the interests of making the university education system work better for all involved.

To be successful, we will need, in parallel, to change how we work and how we organise ourselves.

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3   The Student Life Strategy will be published alongside the final Strategic Plan.

Consequently, our strategic plan for education is heavily reliant on the service transformation projects that are set out below in the enabling priorities section. To give an idea of the scale of what is proposed over the next five years, we have included those projects in the table below. The programme includes a new approach to student admissions, making it more user-friendly for applicants and much less time consuming for staff. The timetabling project, taken together with work on the shape of the year, and a review of programme diets, will result in a stable timetable that can roll over year-on-year, and that allows us to plan for the upgrade of our learning spaces. There will also be work on module selection and confirmation so that students find it easier to choose their courses and staff spend less time supporting them with the administration of that choice.

These projects are about evolution and change behind the scenes, rather than about a radical shift in direction; nevertheless, the results of that change should make a real, positive and lasting difference to all those involved with education at UCL.

Delivery Area sponsor: Vice-Provost (Education and Student Experience)

	Year 1	Years 2-5
Ready for implementation	• Create a new Institute for Higher Education Development and Support • Deliver the Admissions Transformation Programme* • Initiate the Timetabling and medium-term Estates projects* • Implement the first year of the new Student Life Strategy jointly with the Students' Union * See Enabling priorities: Service improvement	• Implement the new Teaching and Assessment Framework • Implement the new Programme Architecture • Implement agreed changes to the structure of the academic year • Implement the prioritised set of projects arising from the Student Life Strategy
Developmental initiatives	• Design a new Teaching and Assessment Framework • Design a new Programme Architecture • Revisit the structure of the academic year • Develop a new Student Life Strategy, jointly with the Students' Union • Prepare a business case for a new Students' Union building and sports facilities for consideration as part of the new investment framework	

iii) Targeting investment in our academic endeavours

Our third academic priority delivery area targets our resources at those academic and infrastructure projects that deliver the greatest benefits, measured against criteria that have been agreed through consultation and consistently applied. This is vital in an institution which values transparency in decision-making and in ensuring that we have real and genuine accountability at all levels.

It is also important that we have a way of channelling and prioritising investment in a community that has no shortage of ideas and enthusiasm. During the consultation process, the community was asked to put forward their most significant proposals for investment for the next 5–10 years. These proposals were for projects that were beyond the scale of any one faculty, department or service to deliver; by definition, cross-university projects. The scale, breadth and significance of these projects was an impressive reminder of the scale of ambition across the university. At the end of the consultation period, there were 139 projects on the longlist, more than half of which emerged through the consultation process.

The initial candidate list of projects was published in our consultation paper *Academic areas for targeted investment* [4]. It included proposals for investment in areas of academic strength with transformational potential, such as:

• detailed planning for the further expansion of our campus at UCL East

• opportunities for interdisciplinary innovation in a number of disciplinary areas, including Mathematics in collaboration with Statistical Science; the continued evolution and transformation of the Slade; and a UCL Computer Science collaboration with the Kings' Cross Knowledge Quarter

• the established of shared, flexible and high-quality general teaching facilities on a central Bloomsbury site in Gower Place

• new facilities for departments including Economics, Anthropology and Archaeology and a new site for Chemistry.

It will not be possible to deliver all of these within our capital programme and our financial context means that large-scale new-build estates and infrastructure projects will not be feasible until at least 2027. This is partly a consequence of financial constraints, but it also reflects a deliberate choice to focus for a period on investment in the infrastructure and working environment of all members of UCL, with a comprehensive strategic maintenance plan (see below), rather than in new buildings for specific disciplines.

However, it is important that we begin the process of determining where we will invest for the future, and so, during the 2022–23 academic year, all proposals received through the consultation will be assessed within a new, transparent governance structure and against agreed criteria. This will allow us to decide our main investment priorities and allocation of resources. The new criteria will ensure that student views are represented more clearly in decision-making and that there is appropriate cross-disciplinary input into decisions before they are confirmed. Decisions about targeted investment over the next ten years will therefore start to be clearer from 2023-24. In our planning work, which will be directly aligned with our Estates Strategy, we will learn from the new ways of working that are being implemented at our new UCL East campus.

To support this process of prioritisation, a new Investment Committee (with associated underpinning governance) will be established. In addition, the Vice-President (Strategy) will lead the development of an institution-wide portfolio view of all eligible major projects. The Major Strategic Projects Portfolio (MSPP) will ensure that every major investment has a clear rationale aligned to strategic priorities and business needs, is affordable and achievable, has a clear owner and accountability chain, and will lead to the realisation of benefits.

An overall summary of the initiatives we will take forward in relation to our Targeted Academic Investments is therefore as follows:

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4   https://www.ucl.ac.uk/strategic-plan-2022-27/sites/strategic_plan_2022_27/files/academic_opportunities_for_targeted_investment.pdf

Delivery Area sponsor: Vice-President (Strategy)		
	Year 1	**Years 2-5**
Ready for implementation	• Set up the Investment Committee of UMC, to meet termly • Set up a new Major Projects Portfolio structure and related processes • Carry out initial assessment of the Targeted Academic Investment proposals to take forward, and provide support for proposals that need further development	• Take forward the first set of prioritised academic investment projects
Developmental initiatives		• Evolve and regularly review the pipeline of Targeted Academic Investment initiatives • Monitor the delivery of strategic projects, to mitigate and manage risk • Reprioritise projects as appropriate to respond to changing economic circumstances

Enabling priorities

One of the strongest themes in the consultation feedback was the need to invest in improving services and the physical and digital infrastructure. To make this happen, we need to find ways to free up the resource we spend on complexity and duplication and redirect this into simpler, more effective ways of working. Our enabling priorities set out how we plan to approach this task.

We have grouped them into four delivery areas:

• a robust financial strategy

• a review of our size and shape

• service improvement

• living our values.

i) A robust financial strategy

The first of these is the Financial Strategy, set out more fully in a companion document to this plan[5].

Like many organisations, we are experiencing significant financial headwinds which, without action, will erode our ability to invest our academic aspirations. Our new Financial Strategy articulates how we will meet our financial needs against this background, with a strong focus on maintaining our long-term sustainability.

Our overall aim in this area is to maximise our income and manage our costs to strengthen our financial resilience. Wherever possible, we want to channel resource into our people (including, over the medium-term, into our pay structures, as far as we can) and into the buildings and tools that support our work. The plan will also set out how we fund our strategic aims: the Grand Challenges infrastructure, our education reform priorities, our targeted academic investments, and upgrades of our physical and digital infrastructure.

To realise the financial strategy, we need new ways of working:

• **New approach to strategic planning:** we will introduce an annual process integrating student number planning and faculty planning processes more directly with financial planning. Under this new process, autumn will allow faculties and central teams to review the previous year's progress; spring will see the development of financial and operational plans that respond to current circumstances; and summer will allow for decision and approval of those plans ahead of the next financial year. These changes will ensure that strategic planning and budgeting are more closely aligned, so that decision-making is improved and the bureaucratic burden on faculties and departments is minimised wherever possible.

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5   The Financial Strategy will be published alongside the final Strategic Plan.

- **Evolution of the financial model:** the existing contribution model will be rebuilt so that there is maximum transparency about how we finance our priorities and so that we can be accountable across the institution for the deployment of resources. This will include the agreement of funding elements for institutional priorities and a planning model that can support decision-making about future affordability and levels of investment over time. This will ensure that incentives for efficiency and the effective use of resources are built into the model from the ground up and that costs are apportioned more closely in line with service usage and demand, using activity data as the main driver of allocation. In the long term, these changes will also create a more responsive relationship between central service users and suppliers, by linking activity to cost allocation via robust data; will facilitate greater transparency in our internal financial management; and will support more effective overall cost control by creating incentives for suppliers to bear down on their overall costs.

Delivery Area sponsor: Chief Financial Officer		
	Year 1	**Years 2-5**
Ready for implementation	• Agree UCL Financial Strategy to enable delivery of the Strategic Plan	• Implement the medium-term Financial Sustainability Plan
Developmental initiatives	• Develop the medium-term Financial Sustainability Plan	

ii) Size and shape

The future size and shape of the student population is an important element of our financial sustainability.

The university has grown significantly in recent years. Student numbers have increased by 75 per cent in the decade from 2009, significantly outstripping the growth rates of comparable institutions. However, there is a view that we are now reaching the limits of what we can accommodate in our current configuration. Investment in critical areas such as the physical teaching estate, our digital infrastructure, student support services and systems and processes that support the student experience has fallen behind the expansion of student numbers in recent years. This growth has also impacted on academic workload, putting additional pressure on staff.

However, some expansion of the student population is going to be needed over the next five years in order to increase our reach and influence, and support investment in our main priorities (including fixing our fundamental services). Much of what is proposed in the enabling priorities will address the legacy of under-investment, but, as a predominantly student-fee funded institution, we cannot invest in work that will ultimately reduce our costs without additional income from fees. The implications of this position were tested through the consultation process, and, while some reservations were expressed about the scale and pace of growth over the next five years, in general the need for a modest increase in the size of the student population was accepted.

Our overall aim in relation to the size and shape of our student population is therefore to manage this growth in student numbers carefully so that we can provide a high-quality student experience and generate sufficient income to deliver investment in the projects set out in this plan, without moving beyond the capacity of the university to support those students. The fundamental changes to our financial model, our estate, our digital services, and our approach to workload management proposed in this plan will also support the transition to sustainable growth in student numbers in a positive cycle. We will therefore seek to grow our taught student population over the next five years (to 2027), broadly maintaining the current balance of home and overseas students, in line with current growth trajectories but allowing for modest expansion in numbers to around 47,000 FTE in the outer years of

the plan. We consider this to be proportionate to the ambitions of this plan.

In parallel, we will continue to evolve and develop our student number planning model to allow for greater sophistication in our approach to forecasting. Feedback received through the consultation process noted that, while the current model represented an advance on how we have managed this process up to now, it could benefit from further refinement: more specifically, the links to the financial model could be improved, and the analysis of the resource impact of continued student number growth (for example, on estates, staff workloads, and digital infrastructure) could be further developed. This is work we will take forward.

An additional dimension of the impact of growth in our student population raised during the consultation process is the carbon cost of recruiting international students. While this category of emission is currently outside the scope of our net zero target, we are nevertheless aware of the potential long-term impact of sizeable numbers of students travelling to UCL each year from abroad. As a result, we plan now to carry out a piece of work to develop methods to calculate this impact with a view to seeking mitigation over the medium term. This is a challenge facing the whole of the UK higher education sector, and we will therefore also work in partnership with other universities and bodies in the UK to develop standardised methods of assessing the carbon impact of international student recruitment and working on collective policies to offset this.

Absolute student numbers and the mix of fee status are not the only parameters in considering what our overall size and shape should be by 2027. We have flexibility to vary the levels of our unregulated fees to meet market demand and the opportunity to increase the efficiency of our space utilisation. Over the next five years we will therefore analyse the potential for increasing our investment capacity by using our teaching space more efficiently (through our refreshed Estates Strategy) and re-examining our policy on unregulated student fees.

We will also explore the evolution and development of our online education provision, taking advantage of the rapid innovation during the Covid-19 pandemic. This initiative will look at pedagogy, technology, demand, partnerships, potential audiences (including, for example, lifelong-learners) and business models to scope an online education offering that befits our position as top ten global university. In the first instance, we will specifically

explore linking our online education provision to our Grand Challenge themes. This work will be undertaken in a partnership between the relevant Education and Research Committees and in full consultation with the community. There was broad support for taking this step in the consultation process, together with an awareness that we need to move carefully if we are to expand our presence in the online education market. Longer-term decisions about our place in this emerging market will be informed by our experiences over the next five years.

For the purposes of this Strategic Plan, we have limited our discussions to questions of 'size'. However, consultation has highlighted a very strong desire for us to open a broader conversation about institutional 'shape' and to consider questions such as disciplinary mix and the breadth of our academic teaching portfolio, structures for supporting interdisciplinary working, and our future areas of priority growth. We therefore intend to initiate this discussion in year one of the plan and will work with the community to define the parameters for the conversation and its intended outcomes as a first step.

A summary of the initiatives we will take forward in relation to the size and shape of our student population is as follows:

Delivery Area sponsor:
Vice-President (Strategy) and Vice-Provost (Faculties)

	Year 1	Years 2-5
Ready for implementation	• Increase the student population to around 47,000 FTE by 2027 • Refine and evolve the student number planning model to increase its coverage and sophistication	• Implement an expanded online education offer (depending on outcome of the review in Y1)
Developmental initiatives	• Initiate a review of our academic portfolio and structure ('shape') • Analyse the carbon impact of international student recruitment and develop policies to mitigate this in the long term, working jointly with the HE sector • Explore options for maximising investment capacity by: a) increasing space efficiency; b) increasing unregulated fee levels • Develop the business and operational case for expanding online education	

iii) Service improvement

The third delivery area under this heading brings together enabling activities that will improve the services, processes, systems and infrastructure that support our research, innovation and education activities.

As a highly devolved university, we have become used to finding local workarounds where we consider institutional services have fallen short, rather than working with service leaders on change. Although this approach has been unsatisfactory for some time, it has worked, after a fashion; but it is no longer sustainable at scale, and we cannot afford to replicate workarounds at many different levels across the whole organisation when we need to be careful with resources for a number of years. Additionally, the duplication and perceived lack of ownership for much of what we need to do our jobs well has led to some tensions and a perception that professional services staff do not enjoy the same respect that they might at other universities. This is, in part, because we have not invested in the tools that would allow our professional services team to do their best work.

Based on feedback, prioritised needs and the advice and experience of our professional services leads, we have therefore identified a realistic number of initiatives where we know we can deliver sustained improvements in how UCL works. These are intended to remove the duplication and complexity that often gets in the way of our real ambitions. This programme of service transformation will be fundamental to the success of everything else we want to over this strategic plan period. Ultimately, it should deliver wide-reaching benefits: substantially reducing the amount of time academic staff spend on routine administration, and substantially improving the resources that professional services colleagues can draw on in facilitating our academic mission.

Work will focus on the following areas:

• **Research and Innovation Services:** the pressing need for more flexible support for applications for research and innovation funding, improved contracting and forecasting, and a process with integrated risk assessments has been voiced by researchers and administrators over several years. We are now funding a comprehensive programme of work that will:

o establish a programme of continuous improvement and investment in Worktribe;

o introduce agreed institution-wide standards for costing and pricing relevant activity, including (for example) those doctoral studentships that are funded by commercial providers;

o determine a benchmarked service standard for in-house research contract response times;

o provide performance dashboards against agreed KPIs to ensure service providers are meeting agreed targets and that there is appropriate transparency and accountability to users in this area.

In addition, we will reform our research ethics process. While our research ethics service works to very high standards, its resourcing and support has not kept pace with the growing volume and complexity of the research questions that our community seeks to address. We will therefore reform the underpinning technology and processes that support our ethics committee and the colleagues who contribute their time and expertise to it. This will improve the agility and responsiveness of our service and make a positive contribution to a research culture that encourages cutting edge inquiry while placing the highest ethical standards at the heart of everything we do.

We will also introduce shared science and technology platforms using institutional capital finance where appropriate to fund shared equipment. Platform technologies such as high-performance computing, biological services and fundamental technologies such as light microscopy or gene sequencing underpin our academic excellence. Increasingly, such technologies require investment in expensive capital equipment that go beyond the resources available to individual investigators or require investment in training research professionals with the relevant advanced skills. To facilitate this investment, we will now establish these technologies as shared facilities or spaces – science and technology platforms - where many

investigators can benefit from the concentration of expertise and equipment.

This approach of creating shared physical spaces will align with our estates masterplan for densifying the Bloomsbury estate and with the UCL East strategy of creating shared spaces, and will require that we invest in maintenance and updating of the estate condition surrounding these shared platforms. We will pursue relevant commercial partnerships for these platforms to access advanced technology while ensuring that institutional investment in space, people and equipment is efficient, effective and cost-recovered. Initially we will prioritise increasing the quality of our biological services, advanced research computing and genetic sequencing facilities, and during the Strategic Plan 2022-2027 we will identify other key Science & Technology platforms to form a 'family' of such supporting and enabling services by the end of the period.

- **Student Experience:** a significant programme of administrative rationalisation is planned, to include:

  o substantial changes in our approach to admissions, including the introduction of automated process where possible, to free up admissions staff to work on complex questions and support candidate selection. The proposals will improve the speed with which candidates receive offers and will support improved welcome and induction activities;

  o a new process for module selection that is user-friendly and dramatically reduces the amount of administrative time required in departments to manage exceptions and rejections. This work will run alongside proposals to develop a new programme architecture, as set out under our education priorities, above;

  o an overhaul of our approach to timetabling, moving from a locally constructed timetable process that is then 'roomed' by a central team to a centrally scheduled system that produces an optimised timetable that is rolled over annually. This new timetable process will be linked to student number planning and estates forecasting so that changes in our student profile and in courses offered can be modelled and accommodated well ahead of the start of term. This change project will bring

us into line with practice across the university sector; it will be vital for us to work closely with departments to ensure that the new approach takes staff constraints into account and delivers a genuinely improved experience for students. This is also linked to the work on programme architecture as clearer pathways and programme diets will dramatically reduce the complexity of the existing timetable and free up teaching space across the Bloomsbury campus.

  o continued work on our new pre-arrival, welcome and induction activities, with a view to integrating module selection into that process for new first years and PGT students;

  o the full implementation of the Assessment UCL digital platform, which will allow improved management of the process of assessment through from assignment setting to marking and moderation.

- **HR systems:** we plan to reduce the amount of time and effort spent on recruitment by investment in key processes, specifically:

  o TalentLink as a replacement for ROME: this will significantly reduce the time taken to recruit new staff, as well as the experience of those involved in recruitment on both sides. The new system will be linked to contract issue, visa support and induction processes, joining up what has previously been disjointed and time-consuming. The new system will be supported by an in-house recruitment team, reducing our reliance on external consultants for more senior appointments and ensuring that deep knowledge of UCL informs our approach to hiring;

  o Appraisal: this vital process has been under-supported at UCL for some time, with a professorial framework widely regarded as unfit for purpose, and multiple local models for appraisal management for professional services staff. We plan to introduce a new system that will work for all roles, replacing paper-based appraisals for many and the Professorial Appraisal Review for professorial colleagues. We will also work on developing a culture of regular appraisals and career conversations at all levels of our organisation, in the interests of fostering talent and supporting our staff to progress through their careers.

- **Improved management of our estate:** UCL's maintenance backlog is higher than other comparable universities, at between £600m-£800m. It has been clear from consultation feedback how vital a period of investment in the nuts and bolts of our physical estate really is; and the difference that we could make by prioritising investment in the basics of campus management and room quality. This must be our priority focus from an estates perspective over the period of this Strategic Plan. We are therefore drawing up a comprehensive Strategic Maintenance plan and will focus our estates investment over the next four years on addressing the quality of our spaces and the backlog of repairs and maintenance work that has built up over time. We also plan to upgrade our digital infrastructure as part of this programme, to ensure that our physical spaces are equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. Building on the planned overhaul of approach to timetabling, we are also scoping proposals for a teaching block that will deliver high-quality spaces for teaching. This will be considered within the targeted academic investment process outlined above, but it would deliver substantial benefits very widely if it proves feasible over the next few years.

The Estates Strategy[6] will also align closely with our Sustainability Strategy so that we are addressing our sustainability commitments directly through the prioritised programme of infrastructure and capital works, including through improved energy efficiency and the introduction of energy generation technologies that generate heat and power with no/low carbon emissions. Although this work will not be complete within the period covered by this Strategic Plan, we will prioritise making the headway we need towards our target of net zero carbon by 2030.

For historical reasons, and often because of merger, our campus is fragmented and widely distributed. This is costly to maintain and undesirable in terms of fostering community. Our Estates Strategy for the next five years will therefore explore how we can bring more of our activity together on the Bloomsbury campus, allowing us to save money by exiting leases for satellite sites, and consolidating similar activities together, as well as building up the public realm that will create focal points for staff and students to come together on campus.

- **New operating models for professional services functions:** as an organisation that has consistently solved – or managed – problems locally, we do not currently have clear lines between those professional staff located in departments and those in the relevant central teams. This has meant significant duplication and a disconnect in ways of working across the university; we simply cannot afford to keep organising ourselves in this way. So that we can free up time for staff to use their skills and expertise where they have the most impact, we need a consistent framework that means departments do not have to come up with their own approaches to what should be standard work across the university. To do this properly, we will need to look again at how our professional services are structured across the university and bring them within defined lines of management and accountability. The first step in this process is the appointment of an Executive Director of Faculty Operations, who will facilitate more effective service delivery across faculties and work with central teams to co-ordinate this move to more consistent professional services structures across the university. This will be followed by a programme of operating model review, identifying where various professional services functions are best undertaken, and reconfiguring teams to make this happen. This will enable professional services functions and Vice Provost (VP) offices to connect with faculties more effectively; it will allow us to accommodate important local differences within a process that has a clear institutional owner who can be held accountable for service quality and will enable the further development of business partnering roles to ensure central services work with faculties and departments in an aligned and consistent way.

Taken together, the service transformation programme will require a substantial amount of work, but it is intended to effect a step change in how we operate over the next five years. The provisional timings for each piece of work are set out below:

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6   The Estates Strategy will be published alongside the final Strategic Plan.

Delivery Area sponsors:
Vice-President (Operations) and Vice-Provost (Faculties)

	Year 1	Years 2-5
Ready for implementation	• Create a recruitment service and replace ROME with TalentLink (Chief People Officer) • Achieve a benchmarked standard for research contract response time (Executive Director of Research and Innovation Services) • Upgrade the appraisal system (Chief People Officer / Director of Organisational Development) • Upgrade the approach to strategic and financial planning (Chief Finance Officer / Director of Finance and Business Planning) • Recruit Executive Director of Faculty Operations (Vice-Provost (Faculties) / Vice-President (Operations)	•Implement the Estates Strategy (Executive Director of Estates / Vice-President (Operations) • Implement the Strategic Maintenance Plan (Executive Director of Estates Operations) • Implement consistent professional services structures across the university, including business partnering (Vice-Provost (Faculties) and Vice-President (Operations) working with Executive Director of Faculty Operations / Faculty Deans / Faculty Directors of Operations • Establish end-to-end processes with single accountable owners (Vice-President (Operations)
Developmental initiatives	• Develop the Estates Strategy (Vice-President (Operations) with Executive Director of Estates • Develop the Strategic Maintenance Plan (Executive Director of Estates Operations) • Develop excellent science and technology platforms (with individual priorities to be confirmed) • Map consistent professional services structures across the university Vice-President (Operations) working with Vice-Provost / President team and Faculty Deans / DOOs	

iv) Living our values

Finally, we come to an area of focus that is clearly of great significance to members of UCL. Community, relationships and dialogue between disparate groups are all vital for the success of a university and for fostering a culture of trust and mutual accountability, which was a strong theme through feedback to the consultation. The contributions we received on this issue make clear that we need to build on our stated commitment to inclusion, belonging and equity with sustained action, and that, if we aspire to inclusion and openness, then we need to ensure that all voices are heard. A fourth enabler for our strategy, then, is a leadership commitment to a people-led culture and to a renewed focus on equity, inclusion and diversity, as well as steps to amplify the community voice in institutional decisions and a clearer, values-led approach to regulation and policy.

Leadership and support

The right leadership in this area is vital. We will therefore develop the role of the Chief People Officer so that, in addition to responsibility for making HR work effectively for all staff, they lead on ensuring that people considerations are at the heart of everything we do. We will explore ways of bringing HR and EDI together to work more closely, in order to support our ambitions in this area. We will also review the leadership programmes we run for staff in all roles to provide opportunities for detailed and regular reflection on the implications of our values for their work. Recognising that those dealing with sensitive interpersonal and cultural issues can require impartial support, we will also appoint an independent Staff Mediator to fulfil that function. This has been a community priority for several years and this individual will have an important role to play in building our capacity to resolve issues openly and with respect for all involved.

In addition to strengthening leadership capacity, we also want to take steps to amplify staff voice in institutional decision-making, so that we make effective use of our internal expertise – individually, or through key groups such as Academic Board. To seed that culture, we are committing to more frequent consultation on major institutional decisions, and to providing the frameworks for staff to build networks and connections across the university, whether informally or through participation in working groups and committees. The precedents we have set through the consultation process will inform this drive to continue to talk openly as a community about areas of concern, about strengths and challenges and about our progress on the areas that we have agreed really matter.

A new approach to policy and process alignment

Living up to our values of transparency and openness also means that we need to take steps to make UCL easier to navigate. The clarity and consistency of our policies is highly variable, and staff seeking guidance on the correct course of action currently fight through a regulatory thicket. To address this, we will set up a small unit in the office of the General Counsel to review and simplify our policies and ensure they are effective against the backdrop of the broader compliance landscape. This will bring them all together in a single place; it will then allow us to review them in the round so that they are mutually consistent and aligned with our values and our commitments on equity and inclusion. It will also ensure more regular review and updating is possible for the future and provide increased levels of assurance. Additionally, and in that same spirit, we will initiate a programme of work to ensure consistency and alignment across our disciplinary processes. Evidence from those processes indicates that they are not all currently configured in line with our institutional values. Some of our most contentious cases can become highly adversarial and intimidating for those raising their concerns; resolution can be slow in others where processes are unnecessarily burdensome. This can take a heavy toll on those involved and can prevent us from tackling areas of real concern because individuals are reluctant to speak out. This will be a joint project between HR and the Office of the General Counsel.

Freedom of debate on campus

Finally, and crucially, we also want to create space for constructive debate on controversial questions. This is vital because UCL is and must remain a place where principles of academic freedom are steadfastly upheld. Throughout the strategic plan period, we will explicitly facilitate collective

consideration of what academic freedom means in a range of contexts, and how, as a community, we can respond when academic exploration pushes us to places that feel uncomfortable. Drawing on models such as the Academic Board Working Group on Definitions of Antisemitism, which enabled careful and thoughtful progress on the highly sensitive question of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, we will be creating regular opportunities for all of those at UCL – and our external partners and collaborators – to come together to debate and examine the boundaries of academic freedom from a range of standpoints, and to understand what those boundaries mean for us in practice.

The specific initiatives we will therefore be taking forward in relation to community and culture are:

Delivery Area sponsor: President & Provost, Chief People Officer, and General Counsel		
	Year 1	**Years 2-5**
Ready for implementation	• Consideration of leadership structures	• Implement new Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality Strategy • Create new policy team
Developmental initiatives	• Develop new Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality Strategy • Update and align existing disciplinary processes • Creation of Staff Mediator function • Programme of work on academic freedom	• Comprehensive review of our policies

Delivery and performance

i) Governance

We will establish clear governance structures to ensure effective oversight and delivery of the priorities in this Strategic Plan, and so that we operate in line with our principles of transparency and accountability.

A Strategic Plan Programme Board will be established to oversee delivery of the projects set out above. The Programme Board will meet regularly to receive progress reports on the major areas of activity and will set direction in terms of delivery. It will report into UMC and Council. In addition, regular reports on progress against delivery of the Strategic Plan priorities will be provided to the whole university community.

We will ensure there are effective links between the Strategic Plan Programme Board and other components of our strategic delivery framework. These include the Vice-Provost/Vice-President portfolio annual plans, the annual faculty plans, UCL's Major Projects Portfolio, our Change and Improvement function, and the Estates Portfolio. Collectively, these comprise our overall delivery architecture, allowing us to keep track of our most significant activities and priorities, monitor and report on our progress, and take corrective action where necessary.

We will ensure that the framework is managed efficiently, with maximum co-ordination of resources and systems, and underpinned by consistent and comparable data.

ii) Key Performance Indicators

This draft Strategic Plan sets out 53 initiatives to be taken forward over the next five years. The full set of initiatives is set out in the table in Annex 1. The KPIs, which will be fully developed for the final Strategic Plan, are at a high level and relate to the broad outcomes we would want to see for each area, rather than being tied to specific initiatives.

iii) Future engagement

We want to keep this conversation going. We will seek to mobilise this energy in the development of future plans as well as in engagement with delivery of the current plan.

We will also seek to build on the extensive participation and engagement that has underpinned the current strategy development process. If we continue to harness the full range of ideas, energy and innovation that characterises our community, our partners and our stakeholders, we will be in the strongest possible position to succeed, now and in the future.

Conclusion

In some ways, this strategic plan is relatively modest in ambition. That is because UCL is, at its core, an extraordinarily strong institution, with a deep commitment to excellence and a track record of remarkable success.

Ours could, for example, easily be described as one of the finest universities in health across the world (given the sheer size and quality of our activity in that field), were it not also one of the finest universities in fields as diverse as education, architecture, and so many others. We are doing well, and it would be a bold strategy that disrupted too fundamentally our core activities in education and research.

In other ways, we believe that the initiatives outlined in this strategy are both crucial and urgent; initiatives to invest in our programme of Grand Challenges, to ensure transparency in our decision-making, to develop our educational offerings, and to prioritise a comprehensive programme of service improvements. This is because we face sustained financial and organisational challenges that must be met in order to support the extraordinary creativity and academic excellence of our community of students and staff. In that this strategic plan proposes change, it is change to sustain the very best of what we do in our core historic mission.

We remain a place of excellence, committed to serving our country and our world by producing, and equipping students to discover, 'useful knowledge'. In doing so, we hold close to our values in all we do, using them as a basis for critiquing both existing practice and any change proposed, and keeping as our guiding principle the need to support our people, to ensure that they have the things, and the environment, that they need in order to get on and do their remarkable work.

Annex 1: Draft Key Performance Indicators

Black text = initiative ready for implementation
Blue text = developmental initiative

Delivery area	Aim	Initiatives		KPIs (draft)
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES				
Grand Challenges	• Increase our cross-disciplinary research excellence and enhance real-world impact on the major societal challenges selected by our community, through the creation and application of new knowledge.	**Y1**	• Recruit academic leads for the Grand Challenge of Climate Change and the Grand Challenge of Mental Health in 2023 • Scope Grand Challenges of Climate Change and Grand Challenge of Mental Health with plan through to 2027 • Design Grand Challenges governance structure	**Climate Change (GC)** *[to be ratified through Sustainability Strategy and with GC lead]* **Inequality (GC)** *[to be ratified through EDI Strategy and with GC lead]* a) Senior staff diversity b) Staff minority ethnic ratios c) Student minority ethnic ratios d) % student population from single country e) % buildings meeting accessibility standard f) Minority ethnic award gap g) Pay gap **Mental Health (GC)** *[to be ratified with GC lead]*
		Y2	• Recruit academic leads for the Grand Challenge of Intercultural Communication and any additional Grand Challenges (to be determined in 2023–24) • Implement and review Grand Challenge governance structure • Deliver Grand Challenges 1 & 2 projects • Deliver Grand Challenges 3 & 4 projects • Scope additional Grand Challenges for sequential launch	**Data-empowered Societies (GC)** *[to be ratified with GC lead and through Data Strategy]* **Intercultural Communication (GC)** *[to be ratified with GC lead]* **Enabling Structures** a) Grand Challenge programmes established with Director(s) appointed

Black text = initiative ready for implementation
Blue text = developmental initiative

Delivery area	Aim	Initiatives		KPIs (draft)
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES				
A futures-focused approach to education	• Equip our graduates as leaders and change-makers in an uncertain future; make access to our education easier, more student–centred, easier to navigate, and less bureaucratic for all parties.	**Y1**	• Create a new Institute for HE Development and Support • Deliver the Admissions Transformation Programme • Deliver the Timetabling and medium-term estates project • Design a new Teaching and Assessment Framework • Design a new Programme Architecture • Revise the structure of the academic year • Develop a new Student Life Strategy, jointly with the Students' Union	**Education & Outcomes** a) Top quartile in the Russell Group for all NSS/PTES question sections b) TEF Gold c) Net positive student survey free text comments on assessment and feedback d) Top 10% in the sector for continuation and completion with no 'gaps' e) Top 10% in the sector for graduate destinations with no 'gaps' f) 75% of staff who teach to hold a teaching qualification **Student Experience** a) Top quartile in RG for Organisation and Management b) Top quartile in RG for NSS/PGT Timetabling c) Study spaces per student vs sector average d) Top quartile in the RG for NSS/PGT questions on student voice. e) Admissions time-to-offer
		Y2-5	• Implement the new Teaching and Assessment Framework • Implement the new Programme Architecture • Implement changes to the structure of the academic year • Implement the prioritised projects arising from the Student Life strategy	**Enabling Structures** a) Effective progress on Education Priorities, with project framework established

Black text = initiative ready for implementation
Blue text = developmental initiative

Delivery area	Aim	Initiatives		KPIs (draft)
ACADEMIC PRIORITIES				
Targeting investment in our academic endeavours	• Support our innovative culture in a period of economic challenge by targeting our resources to the academic projects with greatest potential, aligned with our overall strategic priorities.	**Y1**	• Set up the Investment Committee of UMC, to meet termly • Set up a new Major Projects Portfolio structure and related processes • Carry out initial assessment of Targeted Academic Investment proposals to take forward, and provide support for proposals that need further development	**Strategic alignment** a) Number of initiatives and amount invested in each area of the strategic plan and/or against each value stream **Operational efficiency** b) Time in funnel/pipeline c) % of initiatives delivered on time / within budget **Execution** d) Resource utilisation by stage – actual/budgeted e) Delivery confidence – at stag / portfolio reviews **Value delivered** f) % of benefits delivered g) Reduction / elimination of risk
		Y2 -5	• Take forward the first set of prioritised academic investment projects • Evolve and regularly review the pipeline of Targeted Academic Investment initiatives • Monitor the delivery of strategic projects, to mitigate and manage risk • Reprioritise projects as appropriate to respond to changing economic circumstances	

Black text = initiative ready for implementation
Blue text = developmental initiative

Delivery area	Aim	Initiatives		KPIs (draft)
ENABLING PRIORITIES				
A robust financial strategy	• Increase our income and manage our costs to strengthen our financial resilience and generate resources to invest in our people, buildings, and priorities	**Y1**	• Agree UCL Financial Strategy to enable delivery of the Strategic Plan • Develop the medium–term Financial Sustainability Plan	**Financial Sustainability** [to be ratified through the Financial Sustainability Programme] a) Operating margin (£ and % total income) b) Operating cash flow (% total income) c) Liquidity days d) Income growth and cost reduction vs targets **Research & Innovation** a) Research income b) Overhead recovery rate c) Research income and market share % per funder (target: highest in UK) d) Commercial return: UCLB and UCLC
		Y2-5	• Implement the medium-term Financial Sustainability Plan	

Black text = initiative ready for implementation
Blue text = developmental initiative

Delivery area	Aim	Initiatives		KPIs (draft)
ENABLING PRIORITIES				
Size and shape	• Manage growth in student numbers to ensure high-quality experience and facilities for all students and manageable workloads for staff, while generating sufficient margin for investment	**Y1**	• Increase the student population to around 47,000 FTE by 2027 • Refine and evolve the student number planning model to increase its coverage and sophistication • Explore options for maximising investment capacity by: a) increasing space efficiency; b) increasing unregulated fee levels • Analyse the carbon impact of international student recruitment, and develop policies to mitigate this in the long term, working jointly with the HE sector • Initiate a review of our academic portfolio and structure • Develop the business and operational case for expanding online education	**Student population size** a) Recruitment to target **Education & Outcomes** a) [Online education KPI to be developed] **Reputation & External Profile** a) Top tier media mentions vs brand competitors b) Social media mentions vs brand competitors c) NPS d) Sentiment analysis e) Accepter/Decliner survey data f) Cost-to-recruit
		Y2 -5	• Implement expanded online education offer (depending on outcome of the review in Y1)	

Black text = initiative ready for implementation
Blue text = developmental initiative

Delivery area	Aim	Initiatives		KPIs (draft)
ENABLING PRIORITIES				
Service improvement	• Transform our physical and digital infrastructure to improve the environment and experience for all staff and students, befitting a world-leading university, and releasing capacity to support our core mission	**Y1**	• Create a recruitment service and replace ROME with TalentLink • Achieve a benchmarked standard for research contract response time • Upgrade the appraisal system • Upgrade the approach to strategic and financial planning • Recruit Executive Director of Faculty Operations • Develop the Estates Strategy • Develop the Strategic Maintenance Plan • Develop excellent science and technology platforms (with individual priorities to be confirmed) • Develop consistent professional services structures across the university	**Campus Experience** *[to be ratified through the Estates Strategy]* a) Statutory compliance (operational and capital) b) T100 compliance c) Space condition % d) Space suitability % e) Capital spend: agreed vs actual f) Leasehold % g) External space % h) Maintenance KPI **Research & innovation** a) BSU recovery and availability vs demand b) Physical space for research vs demand c) Contract lead time (3-month median)
		Y2 -5	• Implement the Estates Strategy • Implement the Strategic Maintenance plan • Implement consistent professional services structures across the university, including business partnering • Establish end-to-end processes with single accountable owners	**Efficiency** a) Major process family digitisation % b) % procurement spend with category management c) % of procurement categories that govern spend d) [UniForum benchmark tbc] e) Workforce efficiency: spans of control f) Space utilisation % g) People-per-sqm

Black text = initiative ready for implementation
Blue text = developmental initiative

Delivery area	Aim	Initiatives		KPIs (draft)
ENABLING PRIORITIES				
Living our values	• Build on our commitment to inclusion, belonging and equity with sustained action, to create the space for constructive debate on controversial questions, and to afford greater priority for our community voice in institutional decisions	**Y1**	• Consideration of leadership structures • Update and align existing disciplinary processes • Develop a new Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality Strategy	**Campus Experience** a) Staff survey workload b) Staff survey wellbeing c) Stress absence d) Sickness absence e) Recruitment and retention targets f) Turnover g) Health & Safety h) OH referrals
		Y2 -5	• Implement new Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality Strategy	