

UCLU welcomes the opportunity to respond to the UCL Education Strategy Consultation. UCLU are the representative body for students at University College London and represent more than 35,000 students. Of these, over 50% are postgraduate and 30% are from 150 countries outside the UK.

UCLU believe that education at UCL is changing and the Education Strategy should reflect the ambition set out in UCL 2034 for UCL to be *a global leader in the integration of research and education, underpinning an inspirational student experience*ⁱ, where students are key members of the university community *as full members in the future of UCL*ⁱⁱ. UCLU strongly believe that students are partners in the delivery and enhancement of their learning experience and as such have an important role to play.

Connected Curriculum

UCLU are supportive of the Connected Curriculum initiative and we have engaged in its development. In particular, UCLU support the efforts to liberate the curriculum and believe that UCL could pioneer in this area of work. UCLU support UCL's commitment to eliminate the attainment gap for black and minority ethnic students and we urge UCL to make greater progress on this area of work. UCLU believe that the curriculum should be truly global rather than being dominated by Eurocentric views, and reflective of women's, LGBT+ and disabled people's achievements.

UCLU strongly believe that students should be engaged as partners in their education and co-producers of knowledge. UCLU believe students have a vital role to play in the review and evaluation of the curriculum and would encourage greater student participation with the Connected Curriculum initiative at an institutional and programme level. UCLU believe that every student should be empowered to become active and independent learners where students shape their education to their own needs and learning styles, including specific learning needs due to disability.

UCLU believe that a UCL education would benefit from greater cross disciplinarity, in order to equip students with the ability to see their discipline from different perspectives. UCLU also believe that a UCL education should have an interdisciplinary factor to enable students to integrate knowledge and methods from different disciplines. UCLU believe that students should be more involved in shaping and adapting modules and the curriculum to achieve the above objectives.

UCLU believe that support structures are essential for students to navigate across disciplines and make connections across modules and beyond the classroom. UCLU believes that improvements to the personal tutoring system should play a significant role providing this support. UCLU believe that a personal tutoring system should recognise the needs of individual students, be coherent across the institution, be sufficiently resourced to offer academic and pastoral support and promote a partnership approach in the relationship between tutor and tutee.

UCLU believe that the research outputs of undergraduate students should be authenticated and these students should be supported to publish their research.

Review of Regulations

UCLU support the efforts so far to review and consolidate the regulations. UCLU believe students are well positioned to reflect on the application of regulations and the consequences that follow. UCLU would welcome being more involved in the review of regulations to ensure student views are taken into account. In particular, the assessment regulations would benefit from greater student understanding and involvement. UCLU support the consolidation of regulations so long as the rights of students are not diluted and the impact on students is given due consideration. UCLU believe that the regulations should be reviewed to ensure that there is fair and equitable treatment for all students at UCL.

Student Engagement

Student engagement should be seen as a way of doing things rather than an outcome in itself. UCLU believe that UCL should make a strong commitment to *take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience*ⁱⁱⁱ. UCLU believe that students are key partners in their education; this partnership should be a mature relationship where all partners work together. Partners may at times be in conflict with differing views but will work constructively to ensure a mutual position is reached.

UCLU believe that partnership is something more than the sum of its parts. A university community with a strong culture of partnership promotes a sense of belonging and connectedness within and across all members of the community, which is underpinned by mutual respect, support and understanding, co-operation and collegiality. *All partnership is student engagement, but not all student engagement is partnership*^{iv}. UCLU believe that in order to engage with students there needs to be a true partnership.

UCLU are committed to continuing to develop a student academic representation system that is robust, commands the confidence of staff and students, driven by a strong partnership between UCL and UCLU, and ensures StARs play a key role in enhancing the quality of the student experience at all levels of the university.

UCLU strongly believe that our primary function as the student representative body is to be the catalyst for student-led change in order to improve student lives. UCLU should be the key partner in the delivery and development of ChangeMakers Projects.

Academic Promotions & Reward

UCLU believe that teaching should be recognised and rewarded to the same level as research to ensure that both are equally regarded. UCLU believe that academic staff should be researchers and teachers, these are not necessarily exclusive roles and their research should feed into their teaching, especially where this research links to pedagogy. UCLU further believe that a balance of teaching and research should be considered together when considering appropriate recognition and reward.

UCLU believe that UCL should ensure that equality of opportunity should be critical in any promotions and reward process. UCLU believe that UCL should make more effort to increase the diversity of the academic staff body, particularly with regard to race.

Learning Spaces and Timetable

UCLU believe that the physical environment has great impact on learning; spaces should be adequate for the class size, comfortable and safe, resourced to aid teaching and be accessible to all.

UCLU support the move to bring forward module selection to improve the efficiency of space and academic planning as well as greater certainty amongst students ahead of their year of study.

UCLU believe that there should be less disparity between the quality and availability of locally and centrally controlled spaces. Being based in central London, UCL has acute spacing issues and more usage efficiency across all spaces would ensure a more satisfactory physical learning environment. UCLU believe that space for informal learning and harnessing a sense of community is an important aspect of the university estate. UCLU believe that all students should have access to a student common room which is fully accessible.

UCLU further believe that academic timetabling should enhance learning and teaching activities and as such needs a more sophisticated approach than at present. UCLU believe that consideration should be given towards the quantity of stacked classes with no breaks and also the distance required travelling between classes in different buildings.

UCLU believe that the exam timetable should be published before the end of the second term in order to assist students in planning their revision and exam commitments. UCLU further believe that consideration should be given to the feasibility of the exam timetable mirroring the academic timetable. This would be particularly beneficial for students with caring and work commitments. UCLU believe that exam facilities should be familiar to students and fully accessible especially for students who have declared disabilities. UCLU also believe that the special arrangements for examinations should be maintained for those students with particular needs for these arrangements.

UCL-ness

UCLU believe that the term “UCL-ness” has colonial connotations, as it can be seen as UCL, a British institution, promoting one perspective on global issues and education, which could be perceived as culturally insensitive. This perception would be highly undesirable. UCLU further believe that the individuality of students and graduates should be celebrated rather than developing a common set of attributes, especially when such attributes are not unique to UCL. UCLU believe that the attributes do not clearly reflect the current experience of students at UCL and that these attributes are too broad to set UCL apart from other universities. UCLU further believe that emphasis should be given to learning as a good in itself. Many students enjoy the nature of the subject matter rather than being wholly motivated by employability. UCLU believe that many students do not study in order to increase earning potential, but in order to pursue future opportunities that they find motivating and meaningful.

Core Course

UCLU believe that orientation to university is important. UCLU believe that a core course should not be at the expense of specialist course content. UCLU further believe that a core course should not increase a student’s workload but should be integrated into the

programme, potentially with a core through-line or embedded in the courses taken in the first year. UCLU suggest that the core course should be an optional programme which leads to a specific award for participants.

Online Learning

UCLU believe that online activities should complement face to face teaching, and therefore a blended approach will meet the needs of students. UCLU have concerns on a pre-sessional requirement for students as this would deter some students who have other commitments over the summer period as well as disadvantaging other students who have limited access to computer facilities and the internet.

UCLU believe that lecture capture should be mandatory as this would be a great resource for students, and would also contribute towards UCL's duty to students under the Equalities Act. UCLU further believe that the captioning of lecture capture content should be investigated and phased in. UCLU appreciate that there may be concerns over the intellectual property rights of material covered in lectures, but UCLU believe any contravention is covered through existing policies and procedures as this breach is not unique to lecture capture.

UCLU believe that students would benefit from the use of technology to facilitate online interaction amongst students as well as peer to peer learning.

International Students

UCLU believe that in-sessional English language support is of great importance to international students. UCLU have conducted research into the language support needs of these students, and the comments from international students^v are particularly enlightening on the challenges faced by these students. The range of support should be extended to academic referencing and dissertation writing. UCLU further believe that any in-sessional English language support could also benefit home students as well as their international peers. UCLU believe that international students should be referred for support in a sensitive and supportive way, rather than leaving them feeling forced into getting support.

UCLU believe that UCL should make further efforts to improve the integration of home and international students, and create greater opportunities for them to learn from one another. UCLU further believe that academic staff should be supported to develop teaching methods which encourage integration of home and international students. UCLU believe that the International Student Orientation Programme and welcome activities should be reviewed to examine whether this aids integration of home and international students as well as best serving their collective interests.

Review of PGT Provision

UCLU believe that taught postgraduate students are very well positioned to make comparisons with the provision of other universities as they have often just completed their undergraduate studies at another university. UCLU further believe that enhancements to the experience of taught postgraduate students are particularly challenging given the length of their programmes usually being 12 months. UCLU would welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with UCL in order to improve on the experience of taught postgraduate students.

UCLU believe that financial support for taught postgraduate students should be given more attention by UCL. UCLU believe that UCL should not be put off from promoting academic specialism, a combination of discipline focussed and interdisciplinary programmes should be provided at UCL.

UCLU believe there should be more focus on the quality of provision rather than an increase in the quantity of programmes provided. UCLU believe that taught postgraduate students would benefit from a greater selection of modules rather than a greater selection of programmes. UCLU further believe that greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring that taught postgraduate programmes are of a high quality and well considered.

UCLU believe that taught postgraduate students should be provided with the same level of access to laboratories as research students currently have.

Assessment Reform

UCLU believe that UCL would benefit from more creativity in considering assessment practices. UCLU further believe that the assessment load on students should be given due consideration. UCLU strongly believe that assessments should be anonymously marked in order to maintain a fair assessment process. UCLU further believe that where the nature of the assessment makes it difficult for the student to remain anonymous, a pool of assessors should be involved to ensure that fairness is maintained.

Missing areas

UCLU believe that the Education Strategy would benefit from referencing with the Widening Participation Strategy especially in relation to retention and attainment targets and initiatives. UCLU believe that the Strategy should also consider interactions with alumni and capturing the experience of recent graduates. UCLU also believe that the Education Strategy should make explicit reference to the existing Library Strategy and E-learning Strategy.

Any queries relating to this response should be directed to:

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ⁱ UCL 2034, Principal theme 2, <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-2034/principal-themes/integrating-research-education>

ⁱⁱ UCL 2034, Principal theme 2, Objective 3, <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-2034/principal-themes/integrating-research-education/objectives>

ⁱⁱⁱ QAA, UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B5: Student Engagement, <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b>

^{iv} Higher Education Academy, Framework for partnership in learning and teaching in higher education, https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/HEA_Framework_for_partnership_in_learning_and_teaching.pdf

^v UCLU Language Support Survey, Spring 2015: student comments