



2022 – 2027
Strategic Plan

Student Life Strategy

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Executive summary

This paper sets out our vision for a unique student life at UCL and outlines the transformative impact we aspire to achieve by 2028. It starts by considering what makes student life at UCL unique and explores why extra and co-curricular activities are a core aspect of a rich student experience. It goes on to take stock of our current position, detailing key underlying principles before setting out our future ambitions. The strategy is underpinned by a commitment to work in partnership across UCL to:

- Build on the Students' Union's unique model of student engagement and leadership
- Recognise the diversity of our students and work towards achieving equity
- Provide opportunities for all levels of commitment and skill
- Support the creation of a student life 'hub' at a departmental level
- Develop a coherent approach to supporting experiential learning
- Create more opportunities for Alumni to engage meaningfully with student life at UCL

The paper proposes six priority projects we believe will make the most substantial and ongoing impact to student life at UCL. These are:

1. Sport and physical activity
2. Performing and creative arts
3. Community volunteering
4. Intercultural engagement
5. Departmental societies
6. Vibrant student life in the heart of London

For each of the projects we have developed ambitious key performance indicators to govern our work phased over a 5-year period. This is summarised in the table below:

Project	Key performance indicators
Sport and Physical Activity	

The paper explains the rationale behind each of the identified ambitions above, examining our current offering, identifying growth areas, and setting a clear path to achieve our vision of an exceptional student life at UCL.

Our vision for student life at UCL

What is student life?

Students' development often takes place outside formal educational settings, through the networks they build, relationships they form, and experiences they have. Student life, any alumnus will tell you, is about the friends they met, where they lived, the extra-curricular activities they were involved in, the sports they played, societies they led, music and drama groups they performed in, the volunteering projects in which they participated, and the leadership roles they held. These experiences are a core part of a university education. They support career ambitions, grow confidence, and help to create mature and well-rounded graduates, ready to be leaders and decision-makers.

While this paper focuses on extra- and co-curricular activities and broader campus experience – termed 'student life' in this paper – we recognise the important synergies between 'academic' and 'non-academic' spheres. Equally we acknowledge that the strategy cannot cover every component that might contribute to a student's experience at UCL. We know that Student experiences must be seen in the round if we are to deliver a truly integrated, unique, and exceptional student life at UCL and that is why collaboration with both academic and professional services partners must be at the core of our delivery model. It is hoped that the strategy presents an opportunity to act as a springboard for other initiatives outside its direct scope and will ultimately benefit a wide range of areas across the whole institution.

Why is student life important?

The areas this paper covers are not just enjoyable for students but are essential in helping them to feel part of a learning community, enabling them to meet new friends and prevent loneliness and isolation. They support positive mental and physical wellbeing, build social and cultural capital, help students to achieve better academically, develop their confidence, and learn new skills that will support their future employability.

Involvement in extra and co-curricular activity is transformative in developing well-rounded individuals, equipped with the soft skills to empower them to excel in their formal education, throughout their time at UCL and beyond. To ensure students realise the full benefits of an active student life, a strong partnership between the Students' Union and UCL Careers is essential. By making targeted interventions we can enable students to effectively reflect on and articulate their experiences, helping students to realise their potential, aiding their resilience, and enabling them to be "change ready" to transition to life after their studies.

Extra- and co-curricular experience directly supports students to build skills in each area of

Our vision for student life?

Student life at UCL is and must always be unique; grounded in our egalitarian values and history of radical thinking; built on the strength of our incredible, diverse, student community; and the ambitions we share in breaking down barriers to ensure all students receive an exceptional experience tailored to their needs. Our community is an intellectual powerhouse where talented students, supported by our incredible staff community must play the leading role in defining, delivering and constantly evolving student life at UCL. We will have succeeded when all students feel a sense of belonging at UCL, with a genuine ability to shape and develop their own experiences. Whether by leading student groups, volunteering projects, or taking part in life changing experiences, our ambition is that every student will be given the opportunity to learn, challenge themselves and thrive.

Our goal is to foster an environment where students can discover themselves, broaden their minds, develop their understanding of who they are, and the role they have to play as changemakers at UCL and beyond. To achieve this, we will create opportunities for students to push boundaries, challenge themselves, try new activities, question the world around them, and discover and hone their talents. We will develop a culture of volunteerism which sees students develop skills and give back to their peers and the wider community across London. We will invest in the development of resilient, reflective, and aspirational individuals, whose great memories of their time at UCL inspire them to be active within our alumni community, committed to lifelong learning, and ready to tackle the challenges facing an uncertain world. The legacy of UCL student life will be judged by the affinity students feel for the community that supported them, helped them to find themselves and build their futures.

We aim to develop:

- An environment which allows our students to enjoy a rich university life.
- Opportunities for all (b) (3) (i) 15. 408 (y t t) 1e4 (x) 22 (2)

Principle 1: Quality

Student experience including our co- and extra-curricular provision will be of a standard commensurate with the academic global standing of UCL.

Principle 2: Diversity, inclusion, and belonging

Extra- and co-curricular provision will reflect and embed the value we place on diversity, inclusion and belonging to support our equalities and wellbeing agendas. Each student's unique circumstances will be recognised, and the right support and opportunities put in place to ensure the best outcome for them.

Principle 3: Partnerships

UCL and the Students' Union will work in partnership to create an environment where students can thrive in all aspects of their student life. UCL recognises and supports the role of the Students' Union as the main delivery partner for co- and extra-curricular activity at UCL, recognising that genuinely student-led activity in this area is a key unique selling point for the university and something to cherish. Ensuring a strong partnership between the Higher Education Development and Support Institute (HEDS) and the Students' Union will be central in maximizing the impact of these activities.

UCL and the Students' Union will work in partnership to provide a wide range of opportunities for all, to equip our students to achieve their personal ambitions and make positive contributions to society. In collaboration with UCL Careers, we will create moments for students to reflect on the skills developed through the activities they have been involved with at UCL, using this knowledge to help them achieve their career goals.

Principle 5: Environment

Focus on the Students' Union's unique

Develop a coherent approach to supporting experiential learning.

Our approach will be underpinned by a strong partnership across UCL aimed at maximizing the impact of experiential learning in all its forms. Working closely with the new Higher Education Development and Support Institute (HEDS) we will ensure a coherent, integrated approach to empowering students to recognise, reflect and articulate the skills they have developed through engagement with our programmes.

Enable Alumni to engage meaningfully with student life at UCL.

Through a strong partnership with Alumni Relations, we will seek out meaningful opportunities to harness the talent and enthusiasm of the alumni community. Whether it be through mentoring student leaders, offering high-impact volunteering opportunities or sharing their expertise in sport and the arts, our aim is to enhance the student experience and foster a lifelong relationship between the university, our current students, and our global alumni community.

1: Sport and physical activity

Sport and other forms of physical activity build student communities, accelerate friendships, support physical and mental wellbeing, and help to provide a sense of belonging. We want to build an active campus for UCL, where every student has the opportunity to take part in sport and physical activity, in a way that works for them.

Where we are now

At present, our student engagement levels are strong, but not yet exceptional. TeamUCL sports clubs engaged over 7000 students in 2021-22 with a further 3000 students engaging in our other physical activity programmes. Our sporting performance as a university ranks us between 15th and 25th nationally – this could and should be better for a university of our size and standing. We are sector leaders in delivering inclusive and participation-level sport and

physical activity but need increased resource tot68 (r)1 aeay(a)-3.3 (t)26 (s a)-1.4 (18 (r)T.b.6 (e)(e)-5)-4.7 if7 (t)-23.9 (o)-7.-ph(o)-7 (r)-4 (u)p.3h24 8-7.1 (t)96.6 (f)3 (o)-7 (r)-11.46)13.3 (5 (c)-9 (a)-7.7 (l a)-3 2.2 (v)-2.7 (i)-4.7 (t)-24 6 (-)-s 9.5 (u)-7.6 (t n)-ph(o)-7 (r)-4 (u)p9 (n)-5.5 (d s)-7.1 (t)orlutss-10.49y(a p08 (oS4 (2y)-2.2s)-5.5 (i)-5 11(s)-p08 (oH)-5 (l)up)-396.bWs8 25.5 .2p36sp0p(45-1dpph9t. O 442-.323. -38- (d U 44TJ(e pm-- 4r l- 326(o0o)43 (y)-282-.5-74Td5ii)h(2T11 .4 f9 (u (t))-744e)-

c. Supporting students to reach their sporting potential.

- i. Expand our disability sport programme providing opportunities for students with disabilities, alongside targeted initiatives for students struggling with their mental health.
- ii. Upskill our students as coaches and officials, enabling them to gain qualifications, whilst increasing our volunteer workforce to deliver sport internally and within the local community.
- iii. Gain Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) accreditation, evidencing that UCL provides a supportive university experience where dual

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b. Increase the accessibility of this creative education

Develop and expand our existing music, drama, dance and student media programme to enable increased levels of participation at all levels across our diverse student community, with a particular focus on areas that drive high levels of participation.

- i. Provide increased support to our music, arts, drama, and dance groups to allow them to scale up their activities to reach more students at all levels, including supporting emerging talent with more professional creative support.
- ii. Develop a 'Creative Development Plan' with each arts society to highlight areas for progression and expansion and provide clear actionable steps towards this.
- iii. Establish the creative education programme – a series of inclusive courses, with minimal cost for students, that allow students to try activities and develop skills and confidence within the disciplines of music, drama, art, and dance. This will include peer-to-peer tuition to reduce costs as well as advanced professional classes, supported by a bursaries programme to ensure access for all.
- iv. Develop a musical instrument and equipment library for student use, removing a key barrier to participation.
- v. Provide additional support for student media outlets, creating more opportunities for students to contribute towards publications and develop journalistic, technical and editorial skills.

c. Make Bloomsbury Theatre the home of artsUCL

Maximise the potential benefits of the Theatre and Studio Theatre for our student community, nurturing a collaborative arts community at UCL that benefits students and academic colleagues.

- i. Continue to build the profile of our student shows in the Bloomsbury Theatre to maximise its potential as a key asset for the student community.
- ii. Hold a collaborative artsUCL showcase at the beginning of each academic year to immediately create the association with the community and venue.
- iii. Explore the potential to increase time available to student groups in the Theatre and Studio annually to allow for the involvement of more of the community and ensure more student

3: Community volunteering

At its core, student volunteering is about building bonds – between students and people in other communities, between students and voluntary and community sector organisations, and between students themselves. Volunteering provides them a chance to get out of the university bubble and put their own values into action. It can also boost their wellbeing, help them develop new skills, and gain insights into their academic studies. We want every UCL student to be inspired and empowered to take part in rewarding, well-organised community volunteering that makes a difference in the wider world.

Where we are now

We have three areas of focus:

- Community Partners – we place UCL students with volunteering opportunities at our network of community partners.

c. Integrate community volunteering with academic departments and UCL Careers

We know that co-curricular volunteering can enhance students' academic experience and expose them to more informal and diverse learning environments. However, take up is highly variable across departments and faculties. We aim to unleash the learning potential of community volunteering.

- i. Grow the Community Research Initiative for Students (CRIS). Our CRIS programme connects master's students and community organisations so they can collaborate on research projects and solve real world challenges. Our aim is to expand this programme, doubling uptake from 200 to 400 as a first step. This could include opening the programme to final year UG students and to PGR students.
- ii. Expand the number of student-led community projects based in academic departments.
- iii. Expand our 'Building Bridges' programme where students, academic staff, and community partners co-design subject-specific volunteer roles.
- iv. Improve our support for department and faculty-led volunteering programmes, building upon the model of our partnership with UCL Engineering Outreach.
- v. Build on existing links with UCL Careers. UCL Careers and the Volunteering Service already work closely on projects like 'Volunteering & Your CV' and the recent UCL Charity Consultancy Challenge. There is great potential for further work, for example increasing support for work-based learning and around UCL Careers themed weeks.
- vi. Embed community volunteering within the UCL East campus, working closely with the academic departments there, the Engagement East team, and Access & Widening Participation.
- vii. Work with Innovation and Enterprise and our community partners to develop a 'initiative taking' programme designed to ensure that all students can be active participants in the betterment of UCL and their own student experience. By providing a structured programme of skills sessions and coaching, we will incubate the next generation of social entrepreneurs; while supporting individuals to take initiative and work on projects which tackle the challenges at UCL that matter the most to them.

Key performance indicators

1. By 2028 the number of students taking part in community volunteering will exceed 5000.
2. By 2028 students completing their dissertation through CRIS will increase from 200 to 800.
3. By 2028 the hours students give to volunteering will increase from 60,000 to 100,000.
4. By 2028 there will be at least 10,000 volunteers (peer to peer and in the community) supported by Student's Union UCL.

4: Intercultural engagement

UCL's student community is one of the most diverse in the world, however, students do not always realise the benefits. We want to create a truly global experience for all students at UCL, harnessing

c. Enable international mobility

We will develop opportunities for international mobility and partnerships across the globe which broaden student horizons and develop global citizenship skills through co-curricular activity.

- i. Develop a national pilot project to promote international opportunities by supporting clubs, societies, and volunteering groups to take part in volunteering projects abroad with at least 750 students involved in international volunteering projects by 2027.
- ii. Develop several international partnerships enabling elected student officers to build peer relationships and connections with universities and students' unions across the world that will help provide UCL students with the opportunities to travel and have first-hand experience of the differences and similarities in student life.

d. Disagreeing well at a global university

We have a rich tradition of actively promoting freedom of speech, hosting events which broaden the horizon of students across UCL, exposing our community to a wide variety of often antithetical viewpoints, challenging them to see the world from other perspectives and to better understand the role they play as global citizens. Expanding our work in this space to facilitate a wide range of opportunities to tackle controversial issues whilst supporting our students to disagree well should be a central aspect of a UCL education.

- i. Pilot a modern, inclusive series of open student debates focused on tackling the grand challenges facing the world. We will create a forward thinking and vibrant programme that will embed the culture of civil discourse within the student community at UCL enabling our r3 (t)3.1 (i)1.1 (jEMC -6)-5 (d)-4.

c. Build strong academic representative and staff partnerships

We will enhance relationships between departmental societies and Academic Reps to strengthen the student voice, invigorate discussions on how departments can improve student experience in the round, to provide the best opportunities to their learning community.

- i. Create an agreed model which enables all new departmental societies to integrate the related Academic Reps onto their committee.
- ii. Bridge the gap between UCL departments and the Students' Union, share resources and administrative responsibilities that alleviate pressure on UCL staff so they can focus on providing the best education and tailored experiences.
- iii. Ensure all departmental societies have a designated point of contact in their department they can rely on for support.
- iv. Work with HEDS to build a coherent approach to delivering additional wholesale co/extra and formal curricular support.

Key performance indicators

1. By 2026 50% courses will have an active departmental society.
2. By 2027 75% student leaders complete the departmental5 lent leade le8.8 (n)-7.72

6: Vibrant student life in the heart of London

UCL's estate is unique, expansive, and provides

c. Discover London

Off-campus, we must capitalise on the incredible opportunities that our location in London offers our students. We should not leave this to chance but ensure that every student at UCL realises the benefit of our location. We will achieve this by:

- i. Curating a regular programme of activity that engages students with the very best that London has to offer in arts, culture, sport, food, and entertainment.
- ii. Centrally delivering a year-round 'Discover London' campaign to acts as a gateway for students to access the best London has to offer.
- iii. Leverage the 'Discover London' initiative to form strategic partnerships with City Hall and Visit London, promoting the huge impact UCL's student community has on the local economy.
- iv. Seek out opportunities to work in partnership

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a. Consider Investment in a new home for Students' Union UCL

Consider investment in a new t for purpose home for the Students' Union which will create a central hub for student life, a genuinely student-led vibrant centre at the heart of campus, and a one stop shop for a vast range of social extra-curricular activities which will be transformative for UCL student experience.

b. Consider investment in new facilities for sport

Investigate potential of expanding the Union's gym at the Bloomsbury campus, moving the Union's sportsground to a more accessible location on the public transport network and the development of multi-sport facilities at the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre at the Olympic Park.

