Calling all UCL Global Citizens. Sign up here to change the world"
Wimps need not apply

Step one. Get yourself accepted onto UCL’s Global Citizenship programme. Step two. Sign up to change the world. Step three? Take your pick from an astonishing number of organisations and opportunities around the globe.

Want to change the world – and gain some valuable experience while you do it? Then the UCL’s student voluntary sector option is for you. Open to students who have been accepted onto the UCL Global Citizenship programme, the scheme puts students into organisations where they have the chance to make a real difference.

“I want students to know that they can go into the voluntary sector and be as ambitious and aspirational as anywhere else,” says Taz Rasul, Volunteering Development Co-ordinator for UCL’s Global Citizenship programme. “This is not a fluffy option! The idea is that students develop holistically and not just academically. It’s a very safe environment in which to learn about a new sector, as well as providing important insight. You don’t often get to just ‘be around’ in an organisation.”

Making a difference

Languages graduate Abby Briggs (UCL Modern Languages 2016) discovered the benefits of being pushed outside her comfort zone when she went to Age UK Lewisham and Southwark to get the Menders project – a club for older men to “meet and mend stuff” – off the ground.

“I wouldn’t have chosen Age UK as I don’t have experience with older people, but afterwards I was really grateful,” she says. “It was the first time I’d really experienced communicating across generations and different backgrounds. I also learned that charities are run like businesses, using the same skills and methods – which was something I just hadn’t realised.”

Abby says her student team was able to make a real difference to the Menders project, too. “When we arrived, the men were quite discouraged. They weren’t really getting anywhere in terms of telling people about what they were doing,” she explains. “As students, we took our digital knowledge for granted, but we did things for them in our two-week placement – like creating templates for advertising materials and showing them how to build a website – that made a real difference. They emailed us recently to say they’d even made a promotional video! It was very satisfying being able to help them.”

CV points

Third-year History student, Bradley Soh, says that for him the key was learning the importance of teamwork. “Our task at transport social enterprise HCT was to collect feedback from service users and make recommendations to the organisation. It was initially rather overwhelming, but we split into small groups and regularly updated each other. This helped us troubleshoot and overcome setbacks.”

Some students even develop skills that directly relate to their future careers. “I got to observe how a donor’s spit sample is processed and matched with the recipient – a concept I’d only come across in theory in my degree,” says Pharmacy student Saika Walji, who made an information video for patients at the Anthony Nolan blood cancer trust.

Meeting the real world

Victoria Stone, who is studying for an MSc in Geophysical Hazards, agrees. She went to investigate why usage of the Aston Mansfield community centre in East London was declining. “I learned about surveys and statistical analysis, which was very useful,” she says. “But we also discovered that because the centre was next to a Christian church in a predominantly Muslim area, local people thought it wasn’t for them. Muslim women, for example, wouldn’t have attended the dance classes there because the leaflet didn’t specify that the classes were women only, even though they were.

“I want to go into risk reduction so I will travel to areas where natural disasters have happened or might happen. I wouldn’t have thought about it before, but now I will make sure I know who the local community are, how they see things and what they might want and need.”

This is an outcome that pleases Taz. “I want students to think about their skills and what they can do in the world to enact their global citizenship,” she says.

“I want students to know that they can go into the voluntary sector and be ambitious and aspirational”

Taz Rasul, Volunteering Development Co-ordinator

Get Involved

Like the sound of becoming a global citizen and changing the world?

To win a place on the programme, sign up online by February at www.uclu.org/gc. Places are allocated to the first 100 students who apply and also attend the first information session.

Last year, students worked with 22 charities, from the tiny Carnaval del Pueblo to the well-known children’s charity Barnardo’s. Projects included event planning at Able Child Africa, video production at Voluntary Action Camden, data analysis at Causeway Irish Housing Association, strategic planning at Spires homeless charity and fundraising at the Wonder Foundation for women and girls.

If you think you could make a difference – and gain some valuable experience along the way – you can find out more at www.uclu.org/gc and about volunteering throughout the year www.uclu.org/volunteer.

Want to change the world? Give to UCL at: www.ucl.ac.uk/campaign.
Thank you for partnering with UCL to achieve great things. To talk more about how your philanthropic support can transform our shared ambitions into impact, contact Lori Houlihan Vice-Provost (Development) on 020 3108 3801 or lori.houlihan@ucl.ac.uk

www.ucl.ac.uk/campaign