

International Students Newsletter – November 2011

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Interview with Dr Ruth Siddall - Dean of Students (Welfare)



Q: What is your advice to international students who have joined UCL this September?

I would firstly like to congratulate them on getting a place at UCL, this is something they should be very proud of.

Secondly, I would like to tell them that leaving home and coming to study in a new country can often be a very stressful experience. Many of the students who have arrived in September have already been through the "honeymoon stage", which is typical when you first arrive in a new culture and feel excited, optimistic and curious.

As we are now in November, many of these students are probably already starting to feel anxious, distressed, and inadequate as they start to become more aware of the cultural and educational differences between the UK and their home country.

My advice to these students is not to feel intimidated by this normal process of "culture shock" which everyone who has spent a significant time abroad, away from family and friends, goes through.

Accept that cultures are just different, not better or worse, and that differences are accepted and valued.

Be optimistic, it may take a little bit of time but you will feel confident, relaxed and full of potential again soon.

Q: How do you think students can make the best out of their time at UCL – both academically and socially?

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that international students who are able to effectively integrate into life at UCL achieve more academically and have a better overall experience of being a student.

Effective integration is often up to the student to achieve, it requires a conscious decision to come out of your "comfort zone" and meet new people and do things you may have not done before.

Effective integration requires students to try and make friends with UK and other international students and not stick to their co-nation students/peers.

Although this may be more easily said than done, social and sports activities organised by the UCL Union are open to all students and are a really easy way to meet new people.

I would urge international students to get involved with the Union and the different clubs and societies, take on a sport – perhaps one that is not well known in their home country - and enjoy the experience.

Getting involved with voluntary work is another excellent way of making new friends.

Q: In your experience, what are some of the most common problems international students may encounter?

The most common problem experienced by international students relates to missing their home, family and friends. This can often lead to them not being able to concentrate on their studies and not performing to the best of their ability.

Keeping in touch as regularly as possible with family and friends back home and finding new friends in the UK can often ease the feeling of homesickness.

Students may initially find it challenging to understand the UK education system and its specifics. One very important issue is how to use and refer to the work of others in course work and/or exams. Misunderstanding (or not fully understanding) your department's requirements in this respect may lead to students being accused of plagiarism.

To better understand how to avoid plagiarism, students can attend a workshop on the 7 December 2011 where they can listen to a presentation and ask questions.

Q: What would you advise students to do if they feel they are being a victim of harassment and/or discrimination?

I would urge students who feel that they themselves, or any fellow students may be a victim of harassment and/or discrimination to get in touch with me as soon as possible. I will be able to advise them and help them if their complaint relates to another student or a member of the UCL staff.

If their complaint relates to a member of the public I will still be able to give them advice but what I can do to help them is a lot more limited.

Q: What help is available to students who may be experiencing academic, financial, relationship problems and/or generally feeling "unable to cope"?

Academic issues. These are to be discussed with the course tutor in the first instance and, if needs be, referred to the department and the Dean of Students (Academic). If the issue remains unresolved, then students can contact me for further advice but they need to be aware that I cannot overrule academic decisions.

Financial difficulties. It is the student's responsibility to have sufficient funds for their tuition fees and living expenses when studying as an international student at UCL. However, I am able to help with emergency loan of up to £300 to students who are suffering from a temporary cash-flow problem. To get the loan, students need to make an appointment and come to see me.

Relationship problems, feelings of anxiety and depression. If students have problems in a relationship and/or are feeling anxious or depressed, they can come and see me and I will refer them to the UCL Student Psychological Services. Students can also self-refer and approach the Psychological Services directly. All of this is done in strict confidentiality.

It is important to stress that if students are experiencing any of the above mentioned problems they should not "bottle" their feelings but come and speak with myself, the Psychological Services or somebody else who is in a position to advise and help them.

You can find more information including how to contact Dr Ruth Siddall on the [Dean of Students Welfare website](#) .

Further information about UCL Student Psychological Services can be found on their dedicated [website](#).



Careers: Help with finding a job back home after your studies

More and more international students who come to study at UCL are interested in pursuing a career back home after they complete their studies.

You might not fall into this category, but with the present state of the UK economy and immigration policies, it is always worth exploring this option even if only as a plan B.

Here are some suggestions on how to do this:

- Check out the country you are interested in on prospects.ac.uk – this will give you some good information on labour markets, CV styles, common employers and more.
- If you are a masters student, or went to high school in your home country, join your old University or school's Alumni association – it is a great networking tool.
- Make an effort to stay in touch with friends and family back home – often finding a job is all about who you know.
- Keep checking the UCL Career Services [International Students blog](#).
- Sign up to [workshops](#) and go along to meet [employers](#) .

The following resources will also soon be available on the [UCL Careers Service](#) website:



Alumni vod-casts – International UCL graduates will be sharing their top tips for working in their home country.

Go Global – this is a great resource providing a job database, in depth employer profiles and visa information on a huge range of countries.

You can find more details about these new services in the next couple of weeks on the [blog](#) and in December's edition of the newsletter.

Date for your diary:

1pm-2pm on 1 December 2011, G06 - Sir Ambrose Fleming, Roberts Building:

A talk about working in China in conjunction with Price Waterhouse Coopers

Religion: UCL - Religion and Belief Equality Policy for Students

UCL recognises that the spiritual and moral systems that religions and beliefs offer can often be of fundamental importance to the wellbeing of students. To ensure that students' needs in respect to belief and religion are met, UCL has introduced a Religion and Belief Equality Policy for Students which aims to address some important issues that may arise in this context.

The Policy covers any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief, but does not ordinarily cover political belief.

Some of the key elements of the Policy are:

- UCL recognises the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Harassment and discrimination of students on the grounds of religion, belief or non-belief will not be tolerated and will be treated as a disciplinary matter
- The principles of pluralism and tolerance will prevail where the manifestation of belief constitutes harassment or creates a conflict that goes beyond open and reasonable debate
- Religious affiliation does not affect the student's likelihood to secure a place at UCL
- Student ID cards must have photographs which are compliant with the UK passport standards
- Students can use the Contemplation Room at UCL's main campus to engage in quiet reflection or meditation
- UCL welcomes the diversity of different attire worn by its students, however in some situations students may not be able to wear certain religious dress due to health and safety considerations
- Absenteeism from classes due to religious observance is not expected to be a common occurrence
- It is the student's responsibility to inform their personal or programme tutor if they seek alternative arrangements due to a clash between exam dates and a religious festival they observe
- Religious observance, (e.g. fasting) cannot be used as a valid extenuating circumstance
- When on work placement students are expected to adhere to the policies and practices of their host organisation

Further information and a list of useful contact can be found on the [Religion and Belief Policy for Students webpage](#) .

Law in the UK: Subletting - is it legal?

Subletting is essentially the practice of an existing tenant letting all or part of a property to another. Rather than paying rent to a landlord the subtenant pays to the tenant (sometimes known as the *mesne landlord*) who then pays the landlord.



Subletting in the UK is a complicated area but essentially it all depends on the tenancy agreement the original tenant has. Some agreements allow subletting and some do not.

Staying in UCL student accommodation

The UCL Student Accommodation – [General Regulations and Guidance](#) states that rooms are for the sole occupancy of the person(s) to whom they are allocated and may not be used by any other person(s).

Hence, you are not allowed to sublet the room allocated to you. The swapping of rooms is also forbidden without the permission of the UCL Student Residences Office. If permission is granted to swap rooms, an administration fee of £20 per person will be charged. Failure to comply with this requirement could lead to students losing their place in student residences, as well as having disciplinary action from the Dean of Students Welfare.

If you wish to have guests staying overnight in your room, you need to notify the Residence Management in advance. Guest may stay overnight in your room for a maximum of three nights. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the suspension of the privilege and a disciplinary action.

Staying in private accommodation

This depends entirely on your tenancy agreement. If you are in any doubt you need to speak to your landlord or letting agent.

If you need to fill a room in your flatshare and you are simply replacing a flatmate who is leaving then you are not subletting (as long as the new flatmate pays rent to the landlord/agent and not to you), but make sure you get the tenancy agreement updated to include the person moving in.

If you are moving in to replace a tenant who is leaving, find out what your position is in relation to your contract. If the existing flatmates have a joint agreement you should ensure you are included in that and in the case where individuals have their own agreements you should have your own as well.

There may be charges associated with renewing contracts so tenants may not be keen to do this until the contract expires and a new one is required. In this case they may ask you to simply take over the exiting tenant's rent payments. This does not necessarily cause any problems, if agreed, but it means that you will not have

any rights as a tenant unless your name is changed on the existing tenancy agreement.

With consent from the Landlord or agent, this can be handwritten and a copy kept by the landlord/agent showing you as the new tenant and confirming that you have paid the deposit. The payment can then be paid for the new Tenancy Agreement when the present one comes to an end. Otherwise, this may become difficult if any dispute arises.

If you need further advice please contact UCL Union Rights and Advice Team at ucl-rights.advice@ucl.ac.uk or 020 7679 2998.

Culture: Remembrance Day 11/11/11

In the UK and the Commonwealth, the first Sunday in November is a day of remembrance for all soldiers who have died in action since World War I.

Remembrance day is marked by formal ceremonies held across the country, often with a religious element. The ceremony itself is very simple and has remained relatively unchanged since the first in 1919, beginning with a two minute silence followed by the last post - a British Military bugle call used at war memorials and military funerals.

The most important ceremony is held at the Cenotaph in London and is led by the Queen. This ceremony is attended by most of the immediate royal family, members of government and opposition, Armed Forces representatives and ex-servicemen and women.

Originally, Remembrance Day was known as Armistice Day and took place on 11th November, to mark the official end of World War I, when Germany signed the Armistice at “the 11th hour, on the 11th day of the 11th month”. However, after World War II the date was moved to the first Sunday of November and renamed Remembrance Day to include all those who had fallen in action, not just those of WW I.

Nowadays, both Remembrance Day and Armistice Day are marked with a two minute silence – however, this year will be particularly special because not only is it the 90th anniversary of the Royal British Legion, but the date of this year’s Armistice Day will be 11th November 2011, making the date and time of the memorial silence 11-11-11-11, a once in a lifetime occurrence.

Remembrance Day is also known as Poppy Day because of the red poppy wreaths



which are laid on the Cenotaph and on other war memorials around the country. The red poppy has long been associated with remembrance in part thanks to the poem 'In Flanders' Fields' by Canadian Doctor John McRae who was serving in the Canadian artillery unit at Ypres.

The first two lines of the poem ("In Flanders fields the poppies blow/Between the crosses, row on row") observe the tendency of red corn poppies to grow in areas where the earth has been disturbed, such as the battlefield at Flanders.

The popularity of the poppy as a symbol for remembrance was boosted in 1921 when it was adopted by the Royal British Legion for its Poppy Appeal - an annual charity collection that takes place in the period leading up to Remembrance Day, which raises money to help members of the Armed Forces and their families, both active and retired.

During the Poppy Appeal, In exchange for a donation you are given a small poppy-shaped pin which you can wear on your clothes as a symbol of your support to the work of the Royal British Legion, and also as a symbol of remembrance.

Wearing a poppy has become a huge part of memorial in the UK – even TV presenters and newscasters will wear poppies during the poppy appeal.

For more information on the Poppy Appeal, you can visit <http://www.poppy.org.uk> or for information about Remembrance Day you can visit the official website of the British Monarchy: www.royal.gov.uk

Travel: Christmas Markets in Europe

Christmas markets have a long tradition in Europe. These markets first originated in Germany in the fifteenth century and at fist were a little more than a winter market that lasted a couple of days – specialising on local delicacies and traditional products.

The Christmas markets' popularity increased in the sixteenth century when the religious reformer Martin Luther instituted the Christmas gift giving tradition. The tradition of giving gifts to children at Christmas became a boon for the markets.



As the popularity of the Christmas markets in Germany grew, several other countries around Europe began introducing their own Christmas markets.

Nowadays, the Christmas markets in Europe draw millions of visitors each year during the month of December. What can you expect from a traditional Christmas market is the smell of seasonal food being roasted, fried and spiced wafting through

the air; Christmas songs; locally specific handmade Christmas gifts, such as: wooden toys; glass, ceramic and porcelain articles.

Having listed some of the similarities amongst the Christmas markets, we need to emphasise that Christmas markets in Europe are popular because each one is so different in its own unique and special way. To help you decide where to go, here is our recommendation:

Brussels, Belgium

Brussels is considered the most original Christmas market in Europe. The city centre is filled with wooden chalets selling Christmas treats, ice rinks, fairy lights, music and a giant Christmas tree. The beautiful *Grand Place* (said to be Europe's most photographed square) and the town hall come alive with light shows and music, and a Giant Big Wheel offers an amazing view of the city in lights. There is a fantastic atmosphere in the city centre, famous for good restaurants and bars.

Aachen, Germany

The Christmas market in Aachen is Germany's nearest Christmas market to the UK. Aachen is a beautiful, medieval spa town and also a UNESCO World Heritage site. With its many lovingly decorated stalls, the Christmas Village on the main market square leaves nothing to be desired for Christmas shoppers. Trying some of Aachen's famous 'Printen' gingerbread cookies is a must.

International Friends offer a three days guided tour to Brussels and Aachen, from Friday 2nd December to Sunday 4th December. The price for the tour is £219, but as a UCL student you are eligible to a £10 discount with the discount code ALLIS10. The tour can be booked online at www.internationalfriends.co.uk.

For further details or information on any other International Friends day trips or tours email info@internationalfriends.co.uk

You can also search for tours to Brussels, Aachen and other Christmas markets online.



UCL Students Union: Events and updates

Events

14 November 2011 - **The PhD Movie** - Logan Hall, Institute of Education, doors 6.30pm

Watch Jorge Cham's famous comic strip (phdcomics.com) come to life. This special screening will also feature a Q&A session with creator Cham. An event not to be missed.

UCL discounted tickets can be purchased [here](#). Please login with your UCL ID to access the discount

15 November 2011, 1pm - **Environment and Ethics Forum** - 2nd floor, 25 Gordon Street, WC1H 0AY

Interested in the environment? Want to encourage people to cycle or are you passionate about Fairtrade? Come along to this lunchtime meeting to find out more...

International Students' Forum

Please 'like' the International Students' Forum on Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/uclu.isf> and email uclu-is.officer@ucl.ac.uk if you are interested in getting involved.

We are looking for interested students to help set up a language exchange and plan some events over the holiday breaks for international students staying in the UK.

Your contribution

Volunteering Opportunity

International Student Orientation Programme (ISOP) – January 2012

We will welcome the new intake of international students on 5 January 2012. If you are in London and free on this day – we would like to [hear from you](#).

- You will have the opportunity to meet and network with new international students
- Share your experience of studying at UCL and living in the UK
- Attend the social events organised by the UCL Students Union

Student projects

If you are currently working on a project (e.g. writing a book, directing a film) and you would like to share this with fellow international students, please email [International Support](#).

We will contact you to discuss your project and may put information about it in one of following editions of this newsletter.

International Students House

UCL works in partnership with [International Students House](#) (ISH) to offer you access to even more social events, lectures, debates and away days.

ISH provides long and short term accommodation for university students and interns from Britain and over 100 countries who are studying in London. ISH is also a social and cultural centre where you can meet students from different universities, take part in quiz nights, karaoke, discos and big screen sporting action.

You can sign up for the [ISH newsletter](#) to keep up to date with all of their upcoming events and trips with their Travel Club.

Your UCL student id card will give you a free access to many of the events organised by ISH.

Dates for your diary

16 & 30 November 2011 - Cultural Integration and Consultation workshop

UCL prides itself on being a global and culturally diverse university. UCL values the rich heritage of our staff and students but we are also aware that many of our international students experience inter-cultural challenges during the period of their studies, some of which may affect their academic performance. We have recently established a new Cultural Consultation Service (CCS) for staff and students.

Who is this workshop for: All international students

Aim of this workshop: This interactive workshop aims to improve student awareness of cultural issues and to demonstrate how the new Cultural Consultation Service (CCS) can enhance learning outcomes by providing expert advice to both staff and students on social and cultural issues.

Presenter: Dr Caroline Selai, Co-Director, UCL Cultural Consultation Service (CCS).

Structure: 6pm-7pm: Presentation followed by interactive, experiential workshop, on issues related to cultural and social challenges, and their effect on student wellbeing and learning outcomes. There will be plenty of opportunity to interact with other students in the workshop and with the workshop convenor; **7pm-8pm:** Informal networking session for students where alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks will be served.

Due to the overwhelming interest in this workshop 2 dates have been booked. Each of the workshops can be attended by up to 130 students. To attend students need to register.

Please only register for one date.

Wednesday 16 November 2011, 6pm-8pm, Archaeology LT, Gordon Square 31-34 & 14 Taviton Street. [Register online](#)

Wednesday 30 November 2011, 6pm-8pm, Archaeology LT, Gordon Square 31-34 & 14 Taviton Street. [Register online](#)

07 December 2011 – Plagiarism Workshop

What is plagiarism and how to avoid it? That is the key question behind this workshop, which has been put together as a guide to help international students understand how to reference other people's work in coursework and exams without committing plagiarism.

Who is this workshop for: All international students

Aim of this workshop: To help students from different educational backgrounds understand the implications of plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Presenters: Professor Mike Ewing Dean of Students (Academic) and Mr David Ashton Director of Student Services, Registry and Academic Services

Structure: 6pm-7pm: Presentation and case studies on issues related to plagiarism, followed by questions and answers session; **7pm-8pm:** Informal networking session for students where alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks will be served.

Venue: 6pm-8pm, Archaeology LT, Gordon Square 31-34 & 14 Taviton Street. This workshop can be attended by up to 130 students. To attend please [register online](#) .

If you find that you can no longer attend any of the session above once you have registered, please email [International Support](#) so that we can allocate your place to somebody else.

Please email questions, comments and recommendations related to the workshops above to [International Support](#).

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