FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

UCL Summer Challenge 2016

What’s the difference between a Summer Challenge and a Summer School?

A Summer Challenge is a longer programme but with shorter sessions. Over 6 weeks in June and July students partake in 2-hour subject specific sessions every Tuesday or Wednesday. During those weeks, students participate in a mixture of lectures, seminars and practical sessions, which then supports them with their final research project at the end of the course. An extremely rewarding programme, with loads of university skills to gain, this programme looks very impressive in UCAS personal statements.

A Summer School is an intensive programme where students can experience a subject of their choice for 4-5 consecutive days in the summer holidays. A Summer School can be residential (where students stay overnight in university halls of residence for the week) or non-residential (where students go home every evening and travel in each day). Both types of Summer School aims to provide students with a real taste of a university subject and university life.

Applications

Who can apply?

The Summer Challenge is for Year 12 students attending non-selective state schools, mostly in London and the South East.

To be eligible students must:

- have achieved at least five A*-B grades at GCSE;
- be likely to achieve a minimum of ABB at A level or at least 34 points at IB (although please note that some subjects will request that students are on track to meet the degree programme’s minimum entry requirements);
- be taking at least two subjects from UCL’s list of preferred A levels

We prioritise students who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Will be the first generation in their family to attend university;
- Come from neighbourhoods with low overall progression rates to higher education;
- Are in, or have lived under local authority care;
- Have parents from non-professional occupations;
- Have been eligible for free school meals within the past five years;
- Are from an ethnic group which is currently underrepresented at UCL.

Our criteria are summarised here - www.ucl.ac.uk/wp/eligibility

When is it?

The Summer Challenge runs every Tuesday or Wednesday (depending on which subject strand you choose) from the week commencing 13th June to the week commencing 25th July.

Where is it?

Most of the strands run at the main UCL campus in central London near Euston, Warren Street and Euston Square tube stations. You will get exact directions to the registration point in the information pack if you are successful in your application. Maps of UCL are here: www.ucl.ac.uk/maps

Occasionally, a strand may run at a different UCL campus. If this is the case you will be made aware of this in advance and will be provided with clear directions and transport options.
I live outside London, can I apply?

The Summer Challenge starts at 4:30pm. If you are able to reach the campus for this time every week then you can apply. However, if this start time is not feasible we would recommend applying for a different activity such as a residential summer school.

I attended UCL Horizons or another UCL event, do I still have to apply, and am I guaranteed a place?

Yes, you still need to fill in the application and teacher reference. You can notify us in the form that you have attended a previous programme. We encourage all past attendees to apply and we hope to give you a place, but we need to consider you fairly alongside new applicants, so we can’t guarantee that you will definitely get a place.

How long does the application form take to complete?

Allow at least half an hour to complete the form and make sure you have a parent nearby to fill in the Parents’ Information section. Also ensure that you have your teacher’s correct email address, as once you complete your application you will be given a web-link to email to your teacher.

What does my teacher need to do?

Once you have submitted your application you will receive an automated reply from us with a web-link which you will need to forward to your teacher immediately. Your teacher will need to follow that web-link and complete a reference for you. Without the teacher reference, we cannot offer you a place.

What does my parent or guardian need to do?

They will need to complete, or advise you on how to complete, the Parents’ Information section of the application form. After that, they will need to read through the information pack with you carefully when it arrives and make sure there are no family plans that clash with the dates of the programme. They will also have to sign and return the consent form – you can’t attend without their consent.

How do I apply? When will I hear about my application? Where can I get updates?

To apply, complete an online application form and get your teacher to complete the online teacher reference form.

The deadline for Summer Challenge applications is April 22nd and for the teacher references is April 29th.

After these deadlines we will assess applications. We will contact all applicants by email with the decision in early-mid May.

Successful applicants will receive an information pack with consent forms which they must return before the start of the programme – a deadline will be set.

We run a waiting list, so if you didn’t get a place initially, you might be contacted if someone drops out – this can be right up to the very first day of the programme.

See our webpage and our twitter page @DiscoverUCL to keep yourself updated with news on applications. We usually get hundreds of applications, so it takes a long time to process them. Please be patient and wait for us to contact you.

During the programme

Can I be in the same group as my friend?

If you and your friend are both successful in getting a place on the same strand, then you will be in the same group. However, we encourage you to try and mix with new people as much as possible throughout the Summer Challenge. If you and your friend have places on different strands you will not be in the same group, but you can travel to and from UCL together!

What if I don’t know anyone?

Don’t worry – lots of others won’t know anyone either! Your course tutor will do their best to make everyone feel comfortable, and after a couple of weeks working together everyone feels more relaxed. Previous participants have told us that they made lots of new friends and kept in touch after the Summer Challenge.

If you do have any worries during the Summer Challenge you can always have a chat to your course tutor or a member of the Summer Challenge Team who will be there for registration every week.

What do I need to wear or bring?

You can wear normal casual clothes, you don’t need to wear school uniform or smart clothes. You don’t need any special equipment. We will provide you with the stationery and tools you will need throughout the programme.

I have a disability or health needs – how can you help me?

We encourage students with disabilities to apply. You will be asked to give the details in your application form. If you are given a place, please contact us to advise how we can support you during the Summer Challenge.
Where do I go when I arrive?

There will be a registration desk in the Roberts Building on Malet Place. You will need to register there between 4-4.25pm every week. From there your academic course leader will collect you and take you to your room (which could be different every week).

What about travel costs?

If you currently live and study in a London borough and are able to travel to and from UCL for free (the 11-15 and 16+ Zip Oyster Photocards give free bus and tram travel) then we would encourage you to do so. If you are travelling from outside of London or if you will not be able to get to UCL for free in time for the start of Summer Challenge, then we are able to help with your travel costs if required.

Is the programme difficult?

As the title of the programme suggests, it will be a ‘challenge’. However the students selected are chosen because they have met the entry requirements for the programme and we feel they have the ability to do well and gain a lot from the experience. There will be current undergraduate students or staff members in the sessions who will be on hand to give support if students get stuck at any point.

Is there homework?

You will be expected to work on their research projects in your own time.

How many subjects can I apply for?

You are able to choose a first and second choice of Summer Challenge subjects within the same application form, but you will only be awarded one. If you are given your second choice, you must be willing to take up the offer.

Providing a second choice gives you the chance to be selected for a summer challenge if your first choice is popular and competitive.

Please note that students cannot choose the same summer challenge course for both their first and second choice – this includes Doctor’s Dilemmas.

What if I’m late or can’t attend one week?

Students selected for the Summer Challenge are expected to commit to the full 6 weeks. We will only accept absence in cases of illness or personal emergency. If you are going to be absent, you must contact us at your earliest convenience to let us know the date and the reason you can’t attend. Students who miss a week with no reason could lose their place on the programme.

Students who are selected for the Summer Challenge will be contacted regularly through text, email or social media to remind them of the dates and details.

Who will be teaching me?

UCL postgraduates and academics develop and teach the sessions. There will also be undergraduate student helpers on hand to help in smaller groups.

What is the research project?

The project brief varies from course to course. In the past students have been required to produce a piece of academic work, from a 1,500 word assignment, to a poster and presentation. Your course leader will help you choose a topic in the first two weeks to help you get started. From then on you will be expected to develop your project in your own time. In week seven you will hand your project in and also deliver a presentation to your group. Tutors will then send you feedback on your project two weeks later.

What is the celebration event?

In the final week of the Summer Challenge we welcome your family to attend a celebration evening from 6.30-7.30pm to congratulate your achievement for attending every week. As part of the evening we will also give you and your family advice on the next steps for applying to university.

I have another question that is not answered here.

Please email challenge@ucl.ac.uk and we will be happy to answer.