FAQs for Year 12 students, parents and teachers

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

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.

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.

When are they?

The non-residential Summer Schools generally run in July, but look at our website for exact dates – www.ucl.ac.uk/wp/post16/summerschools

The residential Summer Schools are run in the first two weeks and the last week of August.

Where are they?

Most of the summer schools 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 summer school 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.

Applications (both non-residential and residential)

Who can apply?

All summer schools are for Year 12 students attending non-selective state schools anywhere in the UK (but bear in mind that for the non-residential summer schools no overnight stay is provided and you will have to travel to UCL each day).

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.

For residential Summer Schools, we will also prioritise students who live outside of London. Our criteria are summarised here – www.ucl.ac.uk/wp/eligibility
I live outside London, can I apply?

For the residential summer schools, we strongly encourage students from outside of London to apply. For the non-residential summer schools, students outside London are encouraged to apply as long as they can travel to central London in time for registration every morning. We can support your travel costs within reason. If you get a place and live outside London, we will contact you to discuss your travel costs.

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.

How many subjects can I apply for?

Students are able to apply for more than one summer school, however we can’t guarantee you a place on both. You must complete a separate online application form for each summer school you wish to attend.

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 I do 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 most of the summer school applications is April 29th, though there are some for which the deadline may be earlier. Please be sure to read the information on the relevant webpage carefully. After these deadlines we will then assess applications, and will aim to contact all applicants within 2 weeks of the deadline. 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. They will also be sent a link to an online personal details form that must be completed by the deadline given.

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?

We are afraid we can’t put students into preferred groups as we mix everyone up so they will meet new people. But you can see your friend at meal times, in the evening for the residential, and can travel in together!

What if I don’t know anyone?

Don’t worry! Lots of students won’t know anyone either. We will put you in a mixed group of students from different schools, with a UCL student ambassador as your leader. The ambassador will ensure everyone feels welcome, comfortable and supported and you can always talk to them if you are worried about something. There are lots of ice breakers and interactive activities to get you talking to new people. Previous participants have told us that they made lots of new friends and kept in touch after the summer school.

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 school.

Who are the student leaders?

UCL student leaders are all current UCL students, mostly undergraduates. They are studying a range of degree programmes, have been trained to work with young people and have been cleared by the DBS service. They will help you settle in, help you focus in academic sessions, and will escort you around the campus and supervise you during all breaks. They will tell you about their experiences of university and we encourage you to ask them lots of questions about UCL and university life in general.

What about travel costs?

We will provide a pre-paid oyster card or pre-bought train tickets for all students who request help with travel costs. These will be posted to you in advance. Unfortunately we can’t replace them if you lose them, so please be careful.

What if I can’t attend one day?

Students selected for the summer school are expected to commit to the full week. 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 day with no reason could lose their place on the programme.

Students who are selected for a residential summer school will not be able to leave the summer school at any point, including evenings or during free time.

What will the sessions be like?

The academic sessions will be a mixture of lectures, seminars and practical sessions taught by UCL academics and postgraduate students. Sessions are designed to introduce you to a subject area you are considering studying at university, and to develop your study skills such as group work, problem solving or research. Our sessions are interactive and engaging but are also academically challenging.

Can I skip sessions?

Students are expected to attend every session organised by Summer School Coordinators. This includes all evening activities during the residential summer school.

How many subjects can I apply for?

Students are able to apply for more than one summer school, however we can’t guarantee you a place on both. You must complete a separate online application form for each summer school you wish to attend.

Who will be teaching me?

UCL postgraduates and academics develop and teach the sessions. There will also be student leaders who are currently studying the subject you are interested in who will be able to provide you support and guidance.

What if I get lost?

You will always be in groups, with your student leader leading the way. You will also be given an emergency contact number for the Summer School Coordinator who will be able to guide you if you need.

Do I need to bring money?

No money is required, however students like to bring some money to buy snacks and souvenirs. It is the student’s responsibility to keep that money safe.

Do I need to bring a packed lunch?

Students will not need to bring a packed lunch or dinner money, as UCL will provide lunch every day. We will ask for your dietary requirements ahead of the Summer School.

For the residential Summer School, breakfast and dinner will also be provided.
Residential summer schools

What do I need to bring?

A kit list will be sent out if you are successful, as there may be some subject specific items you will also need.

We generally ask students to bring enough clothing for the week, along with toiletries and any medications needed. A room with a bed (including bedding and towels), desk and cupboard will be provided.

If you wish to bring other personal items, this will be at your own risk.

Where will I sleep?

In university halls of residence. You will have your own room, with a shared toilet and common room. You will have a key to your room to keep it secure when you are not there. There will be a shared bathroom and shower between each corridor of rooms.

Who will I be living with?

We try to make the experience as close as possible to university life, therefore it is more than likely that you will not know the other students on your corridor. But everyone will be in the same situation and it’s a great way to make new friends. There will be several rooms on a same-sex corridor and also a student helper.

Is there a bedtime/curfew?

Students must be quiet and in their own room by 10pm.

Is there any free time?

There will be short periods of time to socialise and chill. Trust us, it’s going to be a busy week and there won’t be any time for you to explore London on your own.

What do we do in the evenings?

In the past we have been bowling, watched a West End show, gone on a Thames River Cruise and to the Shard, and had a quiz night. Actual activities are subject to change every year, but we try to make the week as fun as possible!

Can my friends or family visit me?

Any off-site visitors, including friends and family, cannot visit you during the summer school.

Can I bring my laptop and mobile?

And is there Wi-Fi?

If you have a mobile phone then we do encourage you to bring it as it can be useful for staying in contact with the group – however it is not compulsory. You can bring your laptop if you wish, but it will not be needed as computer rooms will be provided for specific academic sessions. It will be your responsibility to look after your mobile phone/laptop.

Wi-Fi is available in all the common areas and around campus, but we can’t guarantee that Wi-Fi connection will stretch to your room.

Where do I go on the first day?

We will send you specific details closer to the time. If you are travelling by train, then we will arrange a meeting point at the train station. If you are coming by other modes of transport, then there will be a meeting point on campus.

What happens on the last day?

We will celebrate the week altogether in a final session, and then those who travelled by train will be taken back to station, and others will be able to leave straight from UCL.

I have another question that is not answered here

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