Draft 2018 UCL Research Strategy v5.1 – Executive Summary

This strategy provides a vision for the nature of UCL’s research over the next ten years. We seek to build upon the radical tradition – of innovation, accessibility and relevance – established by our founders and embodied by successive generations. This strategy asserts an adaptable framework through which we can sustain and add value to the expertise of UCL researchers, thereby discharging UCL’s responsibilities to the people of the world and its future generations, as well as our debt to our visionary predecessors. It defines a series of mechanisms through which UCL research can fulfil its potential.

What we seek to do

UCL is committed to using its position and unique set of strengths to develop and disseminate original knowledge, not only for its own sake but also to address the significant challenges facing the world today and those that will arise in the future. UCL’s capacity to do so depends on our continued and expanded ability to fulfil this strategy’s three Aims: to inspire and empower research leadership; to cross boundaries to increase engagement; and to deliver impact for public benefit.

We want to stimulate disruptive thinking across and beyond our university to transform knowledge and understanding, and to tackle complex societal problems. We wish to help to enable humanity not only to survive to the next century – an urgent challenge requiring unprecedented collective action and partnership – but also to thrive, so that the lives of future generations are worth living: prosperous, secure, engaged, empowered, fair, healthy, stimulating and fulfilling.

As a community of scholars, we must each focus our efforts, based on our founding values and driven by our intellectual curiosity, to be a force for positive social change. The role of our university is to understand and reflect society in order to transform it, in particular increasing society’s fairness and resilience.

Our Aims

The three Aims of this strategy describe our aspirations relating to research leadership, crossing boundaries and delivering public benefit.

AIM 1 – Inspire and empower research leadership: More than anything, our individual and collective research leadership underpins the contributions that we can make to humanity. We seek to identify, attract inspire and empower those who demonstrate – or show their potential to develop – research leadership, regardless of their background.

Our Objectives

1.1 Become the destination of choice for the most talented researchers
1.2 Sustain a broad research base
1.3 Foster a diverse research community
1.4 Enable leadership in diverse ways
1.5 Nurture research students
1.6 Support the development of early career researchers
1.7 Cultivate leadership through collaboration
1.8 Capture our success
1.9 Pursue responsible research leadership
1.10 Engage in and support leadership across the UK research community
1.11 Enable global research leadership

AIM 2 – Cross boundaries to increase engagement: Rarely can the most interesting questions or the most significant societal challenges be adequately addressed by one discipline, one university or one sector alone. While disciplinary excellence is at the heart of everything that we do, to amplify and inform our research we need to cross conventional, but often artificial, boundaries – between disciplines, between communities (disciplinary, academic and otherwise)
and between different kinds of activity – in order to increase engagement and develop co-design and co-production approaches to research and complex societal problems.

**Our Objectives**

2.1 Foster cross-disciplinary opportunities
2.2 Further embed cross-disciplinarity within UCL
2.3 Extend the reach of UCL Grand Challenges
2.4 Further integrate research into undergraduate education
2.5 Support engagement with different communities
2.6 Integrate research with professional practice
2.7 Forge and enhance effective partnerships beyond our university
2.8 Make our social engagement greater than the sum of its parts
2.9 Pursue responsible external engagement
2.10 Use our influence to develop connections and interaction
2.11 Cross global boundaries

**AIM 3 – Deliver impact for public benefit:** We seek to maximise the public benefit resulting from our research, including by furthering academic disciplines and scholarship, enhancing our cultural contribution and engaging in public discourse, growing national and global prosperity, providing policy advice, informing professional practice, and improving health and wellbeing. We will support activity of these kinds and the myriad other ways in which our research can deliver public value.

**Our Objectives**

3.1 Recognise and nurture the diversity of research impact
3.2 Share our knowledge effectively
3.3 Amplify our impact through communications
3.4 Focus UCL Grand Challenges on impact
3.5 Foster public collaboration in research to benefit communities
3.6 Inform public policy
3.7 Contribute to improving human health
3.8 Support commercial and social enterprise
3.9 Benefit London and our local community
3.10 Pursue responsible impact
3.11 Enhance the broader UK research community
3.12 Deliver global impact of mutual benefit

**Our Cross-Cutting Themes**

Our three Aims describe what we are seeking to do. Complementing these Aims are three Cross-Cutting Themes, drawn from our institutional ethos and characterising this strategy’s approach to responsible research, our institutional influence and a global perspective.

**CROSS-CUTTING THEME A – Pursue a responsible research agenda:** UCL 2034 states that we will ensure that our “research and education are rooted in our ethical principles”. The key elements of this are: understanding the distinctive role (and limitations) of the university in advancing knowledge and enquiry; nurturing cultures of integrity in all our research activities, and supporting rising standards across all fields; leading in ethical consideration of research and its applications; engaging with those who will be affected by our research activity; and enhancing the public benefit derived from research.

**CROSS-CUTTING THEME B – Exert our institutional influence for the greater good:** The growth in UCL’s size, breadth, impact and reputation in recent decades presents us with both opportunities and – drawn from our founding values – obligations. We have considerable potential to help shape the environment in which academic endeavor takes place, to influence others’ thinking and to advocate rational, evidence-based and inclusive decision-making.

**CROSS-CUTTING THEME C – Maintain a global perspective:** As London’s Global University, we will marshal our collective expertise to deliver impact to address global problems; extend our local and global knowledge in order to increase our cultural sensitivity, make us better partners and increase the ‘grassroots’ relevance of our research; support the growth of independent research capability globally, and facilitate partnership working at all levels; and help our students to bring their research-based education to bear on their global careers and lives.