



## Internationalisation of the Curriculum at UCL

### 1 Internationalisation at UCL: our definition

In line with our ambition to be 'London's Global University', and in order to prepare our students for the challenges of further study and future employment in an international marketplace, UCL seeks to offer an 'internationalised' taught curriculum across all of its disciplines.

For UCL's purposes, an internationalised curriculum:

- Gives students a broad, global perspective on their studies;
- Incorporates opportunities for students to consider aspects of the discipline from alternative cultural or geographical perspectives, and to understand how discipline-specific knowledge might be constructed and applied in a variety of cultures;
- Encourages students to develop the ability to communicate in their discipline with individuals from a range of backgrounds and cultures;
- Enables students to develop skills which are relevant to a global employment market;
- Challenges students to explore the values and ethical challenges which underpin their discipline.

These principles should be reflected in every taught programme, to the extent appropriate to the subject matter.

UCL acknowledges that internationalisation needs to be discipline-specific, and will be easier to demonstrate in some areas of study than in others.

- In some faculties, many curricula will deal with global challenges, ideas and scenarios; in others, consideration of international challenges and contexts will be integrated as a secondary dimension, or by way of comparison.
- In a minority of areas of study the subject matter is 'universal', and internationalised teaching in these disciplines will encourage students to develop their understanding of the international context of the subject matter.
- In some disciplines, students will have chosen to study at UCL because of the historical UK or other country-specific emphasis of a programme. In such cases, an internationalised curriculum will make explicit the reasons why the UCL/UK course is constructed or delivered in particular ways, and will encourage students to contextualise their learning as appropriate.

A study abroad programme encourages students to develop a broader perspective on their studies, and, wherever appropriate, students in all disciplines should be supported to learn at an institution overseas. Students should be given opportunity to apply the perspectives and understanding they acquire during their time abroad on their return to UCL.

UCL is a diverse university and the vast majority of UCL disciplines will attract a significant number of international students. Internationalised teaching will exploit the varying perspectives and backgrounds of the student cohort to extend and challenge students' understanding of the discipline.

## 2 Principles in operation at UCL

There are many ways in which disciplines might deliver an internationalised curriculum. The elements below may be combined, where appropriate, or may feature to varying degrees in individual modules.

### Subject content

- Wherever possible, staff writing or reviewing modules should explore case studies, texts and other materials, exempla and/or critical perspectives from more than one culture, national background, or geographical area.
- Wherever possible, the taught material should be presented and explored in ways which encourage students to confront the ethical challenges inherent in the material, and to reflect on their own value judgments and those of the group in responding to the material.
- Students studying material with a clear UK- or other country-specific focus should be encouraged, wherever possible, to contextualise this material against their knowledge and understanding of practice in other countries and cultures.
- Where these principles cannot be applied (because material is highly theoretical, deals with universal principles, or because this approach is otherwise methodologically inappropriate), staff should seek to ensure that the international dimension is reflected in modes of assessment, delivery and student support (see below).
- Students in disciplines which are particularly theoretical should ideally be encouraged to study at least one module in which they can apply their knowledge to scenarios and problems which can be presented in terms of national, cultural or methodological difference.

### Assessment and feedback

- Staff should communicate the rationale for the choice of assessment model to students and ensure that international students in particular are supported to adapt to UK HE modes of assessment.
- Across a degree programme, students should be exposed to a range of assessment models, including those which test students' ability to work collaboratively, to present effectively and to work in culturally sensitive ways.

### Staff-student diversity

- Wherever appropriate, teaching materials should be clear about the reasons why UCL teaches a topic in a particular way (e.g. in contrast to institutions in other countries and contexts).
- Students should be encouraged to select topics with reference to their own cultural and intellectual background. Whether students are encouraged to select topics which reflect their cultural background OR encouraged deliberately to tackle unfamiliar contexts, they should have the opportunity to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each approach with support from a tutor.
- Debate, discussion and presentations should be structured to encourage students from different backgrounds to contribute their views, and to challenge mono-cultural interpretations of a particular problem or challenge.
- Where students are studying UK-centric material, the different cultural backgrounds and assumptions of the class should be used to explore and extend students' understanding of the material.
- Departments should encourage students to appreciate how the variety of their teachers' cultural and national backgrounds can enrich their learning.

### Problem-based learning

- Problem-based learning (PBL) refers to the use of 'problems' or challenges to scaffold students' learning and encourage the collaborative acquisition of knowledge and skills. Working under the guidance of a tutor or mentor, groups of students tackle a 'real-life' problem, identifying gaps in their existing knowledge and undertaking the research and practical activities they need to complete in order to be able to propose solutions to that problem. The 'real-life' focus encourages exploration of problems from across the world, and from a variety of cultural perspectives.
- PBL is most likely to be appropriate in applied and professional disciplines, such as Medicine and Engineering. PBL should be considered a key indicator of an internationalised curriculum in such disciplines.

### **Methodological difference**

- Staff should encourage students to appreciate why a particular subject is being taught in a particular way (e.g. because of the national education culture; to draw out the varying experiences and perspectives of a diverse cohort; to comply with the standards of UK professional bodies).
- Where appropriate, students should be given the opportunity to examine a problem, argument or idea from more than one methodological perspective.
- Where possible, the lecturer's preferred approach to an idea or topic should be placed in a broader context, with students given the opportunity to consider how a different national culture might approach the subject, or how geographical location might affect the ways in which the problem is tackled or the significance it is assigned.
- Students should also be aware that methodologies can be determined by professional contexts, with academics approaching problems in ways that might differ from the approaches taken by practitioners.

### **Skills development**

- An internationalised programme allows students to develop the skills appropriate to future employment contexts. These skills include teamwork, communication and the ability to present to an audience. Students should be given the opportunity to develop these skills across their programme.
- UCL recognises that teamwork is appropriate to varying extents in different disciplines, and course convenors should continue to use their discretion to ensure that the needs of their students are balanced against what is appropriate to their discipline.

### **Study abroad**

- A study abroad programme can be an important component of an internationalised curriculum, and departments should aim to facilitate study abroad for all students who wish to pursue such opportunities.
- All departments with students studying abroad should ensure that students have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences in a structured way, and to incorporate the knowledge and cultural understanding they have developed into their work in the period after their return.
- UCL recognises that study abroad is sometimes not appropriate in particular disciplines (e.g. those with strict accreditation guidelines set by professional bodies). Where study abroad is not possible or desirable, departments should take extra care to facilitate an internationalised curriculum in other ways.
- UCL acknowledges that not all students will be able, or will wish, to study abroad. Those who do take advantage of the opportunity should have strong academic credentials and be adequately supported for the personal and cultural challenges of a period overseas.

### **Collaborations with institutions overseas**

- Departments should encourage staff to exploit opportunities to learn from good teaching practice in other institutions, including through exchange opportunities and informal collaboration with former colleagues. This process can be supported by staff in the UCL Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT), including through the Erasmus staff mobility programme.
- Departments should be encouraged to exploit new technologies – including podcasting, video-conferencing and blogs – to facilitate teaching links and opportunities with overseas institutions where this will enrich the taught curriculum. Support for this is available from E-Learning Environments (ELE).

### **Personal tutoring**

- Staff should make use of personal tutoring sessions to encourage students to take advantage of the opportunities at UCL to develop a broader global perspective (e.g. through module selection, departmental activities, study abroad and extra-curricular activities).
- Personal tutorials also provide an opportunity for staff to monitor whether students are developing the skills they will need for future employment, including the ability to communicate well in mixed cultural groups.