



## UCL 2034

A new 20-year strategy for UCL

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### Our vision for 2034



Our distinctive approach to research, education and innovation will further inspire our community of staff, students and partners to transform how the world is understood, how knowledge is created and shared and the way that global problems are solved.

### Our mission



London's Global University: a diverse intellectual community, engaged with the wider world and committed to changing it for the better; recognised for our radical and critical thinking and its widespread influence; with an outstanding ability to integrate our education, research, innovation and enterprise for the long-term benefit of humanity.

### Principal themes



- Academic leadership grounded in intellectual excellence
- A global leader in the integration of research and education, underpinning an inspirational student experience
- Addressing global challenges through our disciplinary excellence and distinctive cross-disciplinary approach
- An accessible, publicly-engaged organisation that fosters a lifelong community
- London's Global University: in London, of London and for London
- Delivering global impact through a network of innovative international activities, collaborations and partnerships

### Key enablers



- Giving our students the best support, facilities and opportunities
- Valuing our staff and delivering on equality and diversity
- Financing our ambitions
- Delivering excellent systems and processes in support of UCL's vision
- Maintaining a sustainable estate to meet our aspirations
- Communicating and engaging effectively with the world

### Founding principles



This strategy is formulated within the context of our proud history and our values.

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# Vision and mission

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## Our vision for 2034:

Our distinctive approach to research, education and innovation will further inspire our community of staff, students and partners to transform how the world is understood, how knowledge is created and shared and the way that global problems are solved.

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## Our mission (enduring purpose) is to be:

London's Global University: a diverse intellectual community, engaged with the wider world and committed to changing it for the better; recognised for our radical and critical thinking and its widespread influence; with an outstanding ability to integrate our education, research, innovation and enterprise for the long-term benefit of humanity.



# Principal themes

## 1

### Academic leadership grounded in intellectual excellence

Enduring intellectual excellence

– derived from talented individuals’ curiosity about, and commitment to, their chosen subject areas – is the prerequisite of academic leadership. This, more than anything, underpins the contributions that a university makes to society.

At UCL, such leadership is manifested by our academics in many ways, including, but not limited to: contributions to the intellectual life of their discipline(s); developing novel lines of enquiry; taking responsibility for educational programmes; professing the knowledge of a field to the wider community; supporting and nurturing those learning or establishing themselves within the academic community; and being open to engagement with cross-disciplinary collaboration.

We will seek, attract, develop and retain people with the imagination and insight to address questions whose significance are not yet readily apparent, or to provide new answers to puzzles that have frustrated all others. The ability to cultivate and support these talented individuals is a critical test of a global university.

We will expect all our departments and faculties to rise to the challenge of valuing their educational activities alongside their research, innovation and enterprise, and to support and develop all staff, such that they will inspire our students, give them a distinctive UCL experience and nurture their academic and personal development.

#### Our objectives are to:

- attract, retain and cultivate intellectual leaders across the full range of subject areas – and from a diverse range of backgrounds – seeking those who combine a deep commitment to their own discipline(s), openness to work across disciplines in research, education and for societal benefit, and the ability to determine their own intellectual direction
- maintain and improve the diverse environments required to support academic leaders in different fields and of different styles
- be vigilant against threats to the fundamental academic freedoms that such intellectual leadership requires
- develop our staff at all career stages to act as exemplars through their academic, professional and intellectual pursuits, and to be confident and effective at engaging with students as partners in our global endeavour
- be a leading performer, within the top two, in UK research income and Research Excellence Framework performance.



## 2

## A global leader in the integration of research and education, underpinning an inspirational student experience

We will inspire our students at every level – undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT) and postgraduate research (PGR) – and equip them with the knowledge and skills that they need to contribute significantly to society and be leaders of the future in their chosen field and profession. All our students and staff will be seen as collaborative members of our university community, with a shared interest in the future of UCL.

Our students will participate in the research process and the creation of knowledge, supported by our academic and research staff. They will understand the ‘edge of knowledge’ and learn how to deal with uncertainty. Through this integrated approach, they will develop their critical independent thinking skills, become confident problem solvers, be well versed in communicating complex information and experienced at working in a team. With these skills, our graduates will excel in the workplace and be highly valued contributors across all walks of life.

All aspects of the student experience at UCL should be truly outstanding. UCL will differentiate itself through an offer that explores how the creation and application of knowledge contributes to the resolution of the world’s ‘grand challenges’. Students will be attracted to UCL as a university that navigates the most pressing contemporary issues and explores how to synthesise and exploit disciplinary expertise in pursuit of knowledge and solutions to global problems. An innovative UCL education will prepare our students for a globalised world through studies of cultural diversity, global citizenship and leadership and a modern foreign language.

Our students will be inspired by interaction with our world-class library, distinctive collections and museums in their learning. We will continue to innovate in education, introduce new teaching methodologies and offer new programmes.

We also place a high priority on the extracurricular development of our students through volunteering, entrepreneurship, participation in community activities including clubs and societies, social and sports activities, student democracy and campaigns and representation, in partnership with the UCL students’ union (UCLU).

### Our objectives are to:

- attract, recruit and retain a diverse community of committed, engaged and intellectually curious students who will become our lifelong partners in proactively creating a truly great university
- innovate and improve our research-based educational provision to create a learning culture and curriculum structures that develop and foster critical independent thinking that is radical and disruptive, and contributes to problem solving
- ensure that our students, at every level (UG, PGT and PGR), feel that they are a key and integral part of our university community, and that their opinions and suggestions are valued and acted upon, as full partners in the future of UCL
- achieve high levels of student satisfaction in the National Student Survey and International Barometer, placing us in the top quartile of performance of Russell Group universities
- ensure that the specific needs of PGT and PGR students are understood and addressed, such that we develop a global reputation for excellence in postgraduate education
- ensure that we understand and address the specific needs of all our international students, support them fully and help them to integrate into the unique experience that is UCL
- develop world-class physical facilities for study and learning
- become a world leader in the use of technology to enhance the student experience and the quality of learning
- develop a transformational skills, training, work placement and entrepreneurship agenda to ensure that UCL students are prepared to take an active role in contributing positively to global society and are the most sought after by employers.

## Addressing global challenges through our disciplinary excellence and distinctive cross-disciplinary approach

Our commitment to innovation and relevance, our home in the heart of a global capital and the breadth and depth of our expertise offer us a unique opportunity to address the most important problems confronting humanity in the 21st century. Launched in the late 2000s, the UCL Grand Challenges – of Global Health, Sustainable Cities, Intercultural Interaction and Human Wellbeing – are the flagship embodiment of our institutional commitment to provide wise solutions to global challenges.

Cross-disciplinary interaction – bringing together varied disciplinary expertise and different theoretical perspectives – makes our subject-specific expertise greater than the sum of its parts. We have been successful in supporting academic and research staff who seek to overcome the considerable barriers to collaboration across disciplines in their research, innovation and educational activities. We hold that such cross-disciplinary activity produces greater understanding of, and novel insights into, the complex problems of the modern world. We will share these findings in compelling ways to inform the development of solutions.

### Our objectives are to:

- encourage and enable disruptive, creative thinking by our staff and our students that is catalytic and transformative and nurtures the development of radical new ideas and programmes for transformational impact on global problems
- maintain the comprehensive and strong disciplinary base and expertise necessary for the formation of cross-disciplinary communities engaged in problem-focused research and education, and adapt the focus of our activities in response to societal needs
- ensure that our academic environment, infrastructure and administrative processes are designed to encourage and promote cross-disciplinary activity, and the creation of new disciplines
- review the current Grand Challenges and adapt them to emerging opportunities and our expanded capacity, and enhance the support required for each Grand Challenge to succeed and deliver significant and measurable outcomes
- ensure that our Grand Challenge approach continues to inform our teaching and learning such that our students appreciate the wider relevance of their studies and research
- ensure that our problem-focused research and education are rooted in our ethical principles and commitment to generate and share knowledge for the benefit of humanity
- ensure that our research outputs are disseminated to an appropriately wide audience and that possibilities for co-creation of outputs are pursued where those will enhance impact.



## 4

## An accessible, publicly-engaged organisation that fosters a lifelong community

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UCL has a proud history of being the first university in England to be open to all, irrespective of race or religion, and the first to admit women on an equal basis. We will continue to seek out those students best able to benefit from, and contribute to, our thriving intellectual community, regardless of their background and circumstances.

We will admit a diverse group of talented students with proven ability or clear potential from low-income families, care backgrounds, low participation neighbourhoods, from black and minority ethnic groups, or with a disability. We will work closely with schools in London, and elsewhere in the UK, to help raise aspirations and to identify individuals in target groups that might come to UCL.

We will continue to support the UCL Academy and ensure its success. We recognise that our efforts in outreach, aspiration-raising and widening participation must be long-term. We will seek funds for scholarships and bursaries to help support home/EU and international students from low-income backgrounds to come to UCL.

We recognise our responsibility to contribute effectively to society and our local community and encourage a dialogue that will inform our activities. We will be permeable to, and interactive with, the public and all those that support us – particularly our friends and alumni. We will continue to enhance our leadership position in public engagement, both locally in London and further afield, and our distinctive collections and museums will be a central element of this endeavour.

As our students graduate, we will encourage them to remain engaged with their university and continue their lifelong learning. We would like our 200,000+ alumni and our friends to continue to be proud of UCL and act as our ambassadors, and to help in supporting our current students and recent graduates as they, in turn, start on their journey

into the wider world. We will also remain in close contact with our former academic and research staff and elicit their support in pursuing our strategic objectives.

Regular interaction with this lifelong community of alumni, the public and other supporters will function in a virtuous cycle. As we engage with, inform and develop such communities, they will, in turn, recognise our added value and continue to enrich us by improving our impact and reputation and strengthening our external engagement and partnerships – including those with business, the public sector and policymakers.

If we are to achieve our strategy and objectives, we will also need to enlist the help of our alumni, other long-standing friends and key stakeholders in ongoing philanthropic support of UCL. We need to grow our endowment funds and project-based support with a major philanthropic campaign, which we intend to be among the largest conducted in Europe. In the time frame of 2034 and beyond, philanthropic support will be fundamentally important to the future success of UCL.

**Our objectives are to:**

- build supportive and productive relationships with our local community and network of friends, alumni and other supporters across the world to generate goodwill and mobilise them to become our ambassadors, advocates and donors, and to engage all in contributing to the future reputation and profile of UCL
- empower all our staff and students to be agents for change in our community and actively encourage and support volunteering and social entrepreneurship
- further strengthen our public engagement activities such that UCL establishes a global reputation for this activity; and to use this expertise to enhance further our research and teaching, as well as enabling staff and students to develop transferable skills
- increase the number and depth of our interactions with secondary schools in London and across the UK to build collaborative working with communities of educators
- use this network to support teachers and raise aspirations, applications and UCL admissions from our target group of disadvantaged and under-represented groups of students with the ability or potential to benefit from our provision, while ensuring that such students are well supported and retained
- develop a UCL programme of lifelong learning through summer schools, professional development, executive education and distance learning
- build a fundraising campaign for UCL that supports our strategy, is widely owned by the UCL community and links effectively with our partner charities, particularly in the NHS trusts
- build our endowment funds such that we can move towards greater support of home/EU and international students from low income backgrounds through a series of endowed scholarships and bursaries.



## 5

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## London's Global University: in London, of London and for London

UCL is committed to becoming a global leader in knowledge exchange, enterprise and open innovation with societal impact. Our relationship with London is central to this commitment. We will bring our profile as London's Global University and our international connectivity to bear on establishing UCL at the centre of a cluster of organisations that will make London the premier destination for higher education, research and innovation in the world. We recognise our role in making London a better place to live and work in for all, and in promoting and contributing to social equity and environmental sustainability in our capital city.

We will form our partnerships based on excellence and merit, not status. We will expect them to be exemplars in promoting the influence of a global university, with transformational impact and global reach.

London is a centre of government, policymaking and knowledge-based professions. UCL already has numerous links with these groups that inform our research, innovation and education activities. We will continue to develop and enrich these, ensuring that our staff and students are better able to make a difference to the life of the city and its role in global society.

We will help London craft a post-Olympic legacy that generates jobs, supports communities and drives the economy. Our ambition is that by 2034, London will be the global leader in building the interrelationship between higher education, research, innovation and economic prosperity and societal wellbeing.

### Our objectives are to:

- build multi-faceted, long-term strategic alliances and engage effectively with all the key agencies in London, ensuring that we are well connected to UCLPartners and the NHS, business and industry (including SMEs), local government, schools and school partnerships, the Mayor's office and GLA, the cultural and heritage sectors and non-profit organisations
- use our global standing, reputation and international partnerships to help attract inward investment to London
- take advantage of our location in London to develop more ambitious engagement with UK and other national governments to embed our expertise into policy development
- work in partnership with the GLA, London Legacy Development Corporation, the cultural and heritage sector, and with other HEI (including international) partners and the local community, in the creation of an innovative education and cultural hub on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park
- build on our current activities to enhance creation of societal and economic value from our research and innovation and contribute to the intellectual life of London
- be open, honest, transparent, ethical, professional and generous in our approach to partnership working, such that we develop a reputation for being an outstanding and reliable partner
- develop and maintain high-profile, successful partnerships with other UK HEIs, particularly those in London and south-east England.

## Delivering global impact through a network of innovative international activities, collaborations and partnerships

We will enhance our international profile by developing a reputation as a university that delivers outcomes with impact for communities, and that listens, learns, helps to build capacity and adds long-term value through our international activities and presence. We intend to focus much of our new international activity on countries in the 'Global South and East'.

Our emphasis will be on using our expertise to develop shared solutions to global problems by working in partnership with governments, international business and industry, NGOs and the health and social care and higher education systems of other countries. We will build on our status as a world-leading university to develop a reputation for being a partner committed to invest in creating the mutual trust and respect essential to long-term international collaborations.

We also envisage this style of working with high-quality international HEI partners in five to eight major cities around the world in a way that builds upon our current (bottom-up) collaborative academic activities and our Grand Challenge expertise, but that creates additional opportunities when supported by institutional-level collaboration. The aim is to develop enduring partnerships with breadth and depth across a range of academic activities integrating education, research and innovation.

### Our objectives are to:

- grow our international profile through working in partnership and using our Grand Challenge expertise in global health, sustainable cities, human wellbeing and intercultural interaction to help solve problems and deliver global impact
- extend our range of expertise in 'area studies' (social, cultural, political and historical studies and languages) at UCL, such that we have greater global coverage in our expertise, beginning with China, Latin America, Africa, India and the Middle East
- work from this extended base of expertise to build clearly defined programmes of international education, research and innovation, with appropriate partnership networks in these regions and their major cities
- build international bi- and multi-lateral higher education partnerships in five to eight major global cities to help us deliver our international ambitions.



## A

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### Giving our students the best support, facilities and opportunities

The primary determinant of a truly exceptional student experience is the quality of the interaction between academic staff and students. This is supported by library and learning resources, IT support, student services, residential accommodation and the estate.

#### Our objectives are to:

- invest in high-quality learning resources for students on campus and studying elsewhere, on placements or on distance learning programmes
- invest in infrastructure and staff time to support a strategic enhancement of our use of technology to support learning, with a primary focus on students on campus
- provide high-quality student services that support health and wellbeing, enable students to focus on their studies and so maximise completion rates and achievement
- enhance our high-quality career development support for all students and recent graduates
- invest in residential accommodation so that UCL can continue to guarantee affordable accommodation to first year undergraduates and provide suitable accommodation to postgraduate students
- ensure that we have high-quality excellent spaces for learning and teaching and extracurricular activity, and sufficient capacity to accommodate increases in student numbers.

## B

## Valuing our staff and delivering on equality and diversity

The quality and commitment of our staff is critical to the success of UCL.

The outstanding performance of the university reflects the achievement of all of our staff.

In common with other universities, we have struggled to substantiate our commitment to parity of esteem between research and teaching and other activities in relation to the reward of academic staff.

We need to ensure that we maintain an appropriate balance between external recruitment of the best from around the globe with support and development of existing staff. The contribution of staff in professional services roles will be acknowledged and celebrated.

We will seek out innovative ways to substantiate our commitment to equality and diversity by removing barriers and actively promoting the diversity of our community. UCL has one of the largest populations of contract research staff in the UK and we must ensure that they are appropriately prepared for a wide range of future careers.

**Our objectives are to:**

- continue to attract, recruit and retain global talent
- institute systems for managing performance that enable us to support and reward staff in line with our objectives, including achieving an appropriate balance between support for learning and teaching, research, innovation, enterprise, entrepreneurship, engagement, internationalisation and other activities
- ensure that we employ, develop and reward the best people on the basis of merit and fairness with excellence as the key criterion for success
- continue to remove barriers to recruitment, development and promotion of a diverse workforce. Address issues driving lower levels of satisfaction with UCL expressed by ethnic minority staff and staff with disabilities
- ensure that all staff understand the importance of their role, and the role of others, to the success of UCL. Ensure that the contribution of all categories of staff is acknowledged and celebrated
- address the personal development needs of all staff through mentoring, training and development and other mechanisms
- consider the potential for providing some accommodation for particular staff groups in recognition of the costs of relocating to London.



## C

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### Financing our ambitions

A strong financial performance is critical to the success of UCL and we must deliver the best value that we can from the resources available to us. The long-term success and continued excellence of UCL will be achieved by balancing our need to spend appropriately on salaries and other recurrent costs, with our requirement to generate the surpluses necessary to enable appropriate investment in the estate and other aspects of infrastructure, such as IT and library resources.

#### **Our objectives are to:**

- generate sufficient surpluses that allow us to invest for sustainability
- ensure that resources are allocated equitably and in ways that encourage desired behaviour
- ensure that growth is fully costed and sustainable and seek to take advantage of new sources of income that generate a surplus for reinvestment
- enable appropriate financial and infrastructure planning for any new development
- seek value for money (economy, efficiency and effectiveness) in all our activities
- secure substantial philanthropic income at a level that enhances our ability to deliver the strategy
- focus on sustainable procurement and the minimisation of waste.

## D

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## Delivering excellent systems and processes in support of UCL's vision

Our aspiration is to have agile processes that are simple to use and deliver the right results first time; that are efficient and effective; and that limit the burdens of administration on our staff. In a large, complex, devolved institution with many stakeholders, this is a challenging set of aspirations.

In order to be able to meet them, we will need to ensure that we are investing appropriately in IT, and that our mechanisms for institutional planning enable us to direct resources to meet new or increasing demands as a result of changes in activity or growth in volume.

### Our objectives are to:

- have processes that are focused on the needs of the user of the service
- ensure effective linkages between our core strategies and systems development, so that systems support the changing needs of UCL
- be an acknowledged leading university in system development and deployment
- continue to invest appropriately and strategically in IT
- improve our management information systems to support informed decision-making
- invest in infrastructure and other support for core academic purposes in learning and teaching and research.



## E

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### Maintaining a sustainable estate to meet our aspirations

From our foundation in 1826, UCL has had a proud tradition of building innovative and high-quality buildings, many of which have broken new ground in university architecture. Not all of the estate, however, is of high quality – functionally or aesthetically – and investment in maintenance and upgrades has been inadequate for some years. This must be remedied.

We acknowledge the importance of the quality of our estate in terms of contributing to our reputation and to the pride, morale and wellbeing of our staff and students. It is, therefore, a very high priority. The remodelling of the estate will also enable us to better substantiate our commitment to sustainability.

#### **Our objectives are to:**

- finalise and implement a comprehensive capital programme that will deliver a world-class estate for UCL
- improve our planning processes to ensure that the development of UCL does not run ahead of the capacity of the estate
- continue to invest in long-term maintenance at a level that will ensure that the improvements in the estate are sustainable
- ensure that our estate lives up to the world-leading status of our research and education in sustainable built environments
- ensure that the UCL community is appropriately engaged in the estate transformation programme and that it is implemented with sensitivity to the need to minimise disruption.

## F

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## Communicating and engaging effectively with the world

Our reputation helps us to recruit the very best staff and students and compete effectively for funding and the strongest partnerships. In today's globalised environment, we need to ensure that UCL is fully engaged with our increasingly interconnected world, projecting our values, work and the benefits that we deliver for society.

We will spread the word about UCL as a world-class university, both in the UK and, in particular, internationally. And we will ensure that our novel insights and solutions are shared with those policymakers and practitioners who can be their champions. Our future success will be underpinned by our engagement with, and understanding of, new audiences and new channels of communication.

**Our objectives are to:**

- deliver a targeted and evidence-based approach to the recruitment of the very best students, reflecting the future challenges in different markets
- develop a clear set of messages about the history, values, performance and distinctiveness of UCL, ensuring that staff and students have confidence in these messages and are able to communicate them effectively
- use our global alumni community and other supporters to project ourselves effectively to the world
- develop a comprehensive approach to engaging with stakeholders and key audiences, maximising the opportunities for dialogue, the promotion of insights and solutions and the enhancement of our reputation
- be recognised as a leading university in the use of cutting-edge communications technologies.



# Founding principles

## Our proud history

UCL was established in 1826 in order to open up education in England for the first time to students of any race, class or religion. By 1878, it had become the first English university to welcome female students on equal terms with men. The founding principles of academic excellence and research aimed at addressing real-world problems continue to inform our ethos to this day.

UCL is one of the world's leading multi-disciplinary universities. It operates in a global context and is committed to excellence, innovation, and the promotion of global understanding in all its activities: research, teaching, learning, enterprise and community engagement.

Our central location in the capital offers close interaction with Bloomsbury's cultural and intellectual vibrancy, Westminster and Whitehall, the City and our world-class hospital partners.

For almost two centuries, our staff, students and alumni have endeavoured to shape the modern world. Their achievements include:

- advances in communications such as the invention of the thermionic valve, making modern electronics possible, the development of the telephone and wireless telegraphy and the establishment of the first transatlantic computer network connection, the precursor of the internet
- biomedical breakthroughs such as the identification of hormones and vitamins, the first antiseptic treatment of wounds and understanding of the physiology of nerve cells and their synaptic connections
- the identification of the structure of DNA, the basis of the human genome project
- discovery of the inert gases, including neon, which resulted in the first of 28 Nobel Prizes so far earned by people who are, or were, students or academics at UCL.

## Values

[These are taken directly from the *White Paper* – we are revisiting these values through a widespread consultation with the UCL community.]

- Commitment to excellence and advancement on merit
- Fairness and equality
- Diversity
- Collegiality and community building
- Inclusiveness
- Openness
- Ethically acceptable standards of conduct
- Fostering innovation and creativity
- Developing leadership
- Environmental sustainability



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