



UCL

UCL ChangeMakers Project Exchange

Drawing inspiration from past UCL Projects



UCL ChangeMakers: Project Exchange

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Academic Writing.....	4
1. Writing Time	4
2. Blogs: a platform to encourage and share writing	4
3. Feedback Commentary on a Core First-Year Essay	5
Assessment & Feedback	5
1. Feedback Proformas/ student feedback request forms	5
2.....	6
Student Feedback on Feedback.....	6
3. Assessment Mapping	6
4. Assessment & Feedback info on Moodle	7
5. Analysis of Feedback Rubrics.....	7
Careers & Workplace Learning	8
1. Careers Info & Resources Audit.....	8
2. Careers and Workplace Learning Platform	8
Communication, Community and Belonging	9
1. Trial Slack/Trello or similar software	9
2. Mentoring	9
3. Awareness Raising Event.....	10
4. Communications/Info Timings.....	10
5. Showcasing Brochure.....	11
Learning Experience	12
1. Object-based Learning	12
2. Skype Exchanges.....	12
3. Investigating the Student Experience.....	13

Research	14
1. Internal Conference	14
2. Research Methods Podcasts	14
Useful Resources.....	16

Introduction

Through UCL ChangeMakers, students and staff have been doing amazing things together to enhance the education at UCL for current and future students. By seeing themselves as contributors of their education, students have played an active role in shaping the learning experience at UCL.

This guide has been compiled to help share best practice. Our hope is that rather than the projects being isolated events instead they can weave their way throughout UCL so that the great work can happen everywhere. Often the projects are transferrable to other departments and other students could benefit. All the projects featured in this guide have successfully been carried out by UCL ChangeMakers project teams in the past.

Please use this guide to help you think about your learning/teaching experience and how these projects could be applied in your own context. The guide has been designed to give a quick overview of certain types of projects – with more detailed information available on our website at:

www.ucl.ac.uk/changemakers/project-exchange

Hopefully these projects ideas can serve as recipes which you will want to add your own ingredients to that will make them even more relevant to you and your programme of study.

And don't forget, if you have a completely different idea you can apply for funding through UCL ChangeMakers. [To find out more about the benefits of working in partnership and how to apply for UCL ChangeMakers funding see:](#)

www.ucl.ac.uk/changemakers

Projects have been organised thematically.

The following terms have been used to denote which level of study the project is aimed at:

UG = Undergraduate; PGT = Postgraduate Taught; PGR = Postgraduate Research

Academic Writing

Writing is an important skill and linked not only with our ability to communicate successfully but also our ability to think and study effectively. Writing within disciplinary structures is an important technical skill to learn and can be linked with our sense of belonging to that discipline as well as how likely we are to engage in all the opportunities on offer. We have a number of projects looking at creating more such opportunities for students.

1. Writing Time

Level of study: PGR, but adaptable to all

Key Benefits: Supports writing, community building

What it is: A structured period of time when people come together to concentrate on their own writing. There is time set aside for goal setting, dedicated bursts of writing and breaks to reflect and goal set before a new block of writing commences

Difficulty to set up: Easy

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them: Students found it gave them a greater sense of belonging to the department. Hard to find a time suitable for staff.

2. Blogs: a platform to encourage and share writing

Level of study: All

Key Benefits: Supports writing, public-facing outputs, introduces students to publishing

What it is: A blog is a piece of writing published online. This can be an opportunity to publish good assignments, that would be of interest to the public. Depending on the audience, you might need to adapt the work and might want to set up a peer review process. Always check with your course director if you are thinking about publishing assessments online and make sure what you publish is of high quality in order to demonstrate the high calibre of work on your programme.

Difficulty to set up: Medium

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them: There are plenty of platforms readily available and free (including a UCL Blog service). The challenge lies in embedding the blog and the mechanisms for getting regular contributors. You also need to think about how people are going to find out about your blog.

3. Feedback Commentary on a Core First-Year Essay

Level of study: UG

Key Benefits: Improves students' understanding of how to write well and what markers are looking for in an essay.

What it is: Feedback commentaries are detailed markups of essays to show where the author did well, how they could improve and how this fits with the assessment criteria in order to demonstrate what is required.

Difficulty to set up: Medium

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

"My department has been very welcoming of the scheme and the tutors have helped me when necessary. UCL ChangeMakers has provided me with the opportunity to see the situation both from a student's perspective, but also from that of the tutors. Liaising with students and staff members proved to be easier than I expected, and both parties encouraged and supported the project positively."

Assessment & Feedback

Assessment & Feedback is a priority focus for educational enhancement at UCL and probably the area that most occupies the thoughts of taught students. Projects looking at assessment & feedback are extremely important. A true partnership approach is required to these projects – anything developed needs to be helpful, engaging and relevant for students while being feasible for departmental staff to act upon. Assessment & feedback projects – more so than any other area – need to understand the views and experience of both sides before arriving at potential solutions.

1. Feedback Proformas/ student feedback request forms

Level of study: Undergraduate

Key Benefits: More accessible and relevant feedback for students, can save time for staff and therefore make feedback quicker, improves consistency of feedback when there is more than one marker

What it is: A form is developed with designated boxes for the marker to fill in as a guide for feedback. This is attached to assignments when handed in and returned completed with the

work. Student feedback request forms can be used in conjunction or combined with proformas where student self-evaluate their assignment and elect specific areas they would like to receive feedback on.

Difficulty to set up: Medium – requires consultation with both staff and students to ensure the form is easy to use and understand.

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

“The difficult part was getting organised feedback and in the quantity I needed to [analyse and propose useful recommendations]. However the feedback I received is detailed and people are very positive about the idea.”

2. Student Feedback on Feedback

Level of study: UG

Key Benefits: Pinpointing useful feedback, encouraging discussion about what good feedback looks like

What it is: Collecting examples of feedback received by students and their thoughts on the utility of it. Collating this into a constructive commentary/report back to the department in order to facilitate a discussion about what kinds of feedback students find useful.

Difficulty to set up: Easy

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

“Be prepared to continue to refine and adopted your acquired research. Persistence is key, very often students are unresponsive, however you should approach them at a time which is convenient to *them*. Use different sources, look at what existing universities are doing and most importantly be able to justify why you have taken certain decisions.”

3. Assessment Mapping

Level of study: UG

Key Benefits: Reduce assessment bunching, more variety in assessment, assessment that aligns with learning outcomes, assessment that allows for progression

What it is: Assessment mapping is a process that helps teams take an overview of the assessment on a programme - not just module by module. You plot where assessment falls and what assessment modes are typically used. This enables teams to design assessment tasks that engage students with their learning, allow for progression and also help staff manage their workloads more efficiently.

Difficulty to set up: Easy –there is an online tool called ‘Map my Programme’ designed by the University of Greenwich: <https://sites.google.com/site/mapmyprogramme/home>

Feedback from ChangeMakers who’ve organised them:

A team of students undertook this work in the first iteration of ChangeMakers and found the process of mapping their curriculum helped provide solid evidence they could usefully use in conversations with staff about their programme of study

4. Assessment & Feedback info on Moodle

Level of study: Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught

Key benefits: improved, up-to-date and accessible information

What it is: The creation of an ‘assessment and feedback’ tab on all Moodle courses, which gives tailored information about assessment & feedback for each module. The information can include: an outline of how feedback will be given; a section for general feedback from assignments and exams such as the mean mark and common mistakes; a section for lecturers to post answers to questions they have answered through email that have general relevance.

Difficulty to set up: Easy

Feedback from ChangeMakers who’ve organised them:

“We hope that [the tabs] will be built upon in the coming years, as it is a very versatile resource.”

5. Analysis of Feedback Rubrics

Level of study: Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught

Key Benefits: Clearer assessment criteria

What it is: Looking at feedback rubrics to identify where there is abstract language that students find difficult to understand and working to express what is meant in language accessible to students.

Difficulty to set up: Easy

Feedback from ChangeMakers who’ve organised them:

“The project has been very important to me, because my cohort generally found it hard to know what criteria made a good assignment. What made the project successful for me was that during the course of the second term, I could explain to professors how useful rubrics were for students in their module such that they got used more for some assignments.”

Careers & Workplace Learning

What comes after university is something that should be considered alongside students' studies, whether that is continuing in academia or going out and finding a career. We know that students value careers information that coexists with their programmes of study and for learning to occur that prepares them for future careers. This should also apply to assessment tasks and outputs.

1. Careers Info & Resources Audit

Level of study: UG

Key benefits: Up-to-date and relevant careers information

What it is: Conducting an audit of the careers resources to see what is on offer and how it is delivered and comparing this against the expectations and needs of current students. This will enable you to identify any resources that need to be developed or that are not being sufficiently advertised.

Difficulty to set up: Easy

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

"We first compiled and analysed the career related information and services available to...students [in our department] with a focus on UCL Careers, the Departmental Careers tutor and societies at UCL. Building on this information, we constructed a survey [...] aimed at identifying the key issues in the eyes of students and possible solutions."

2. Careers and Workplace Learning Platform

Level of study: All

Key Benefits: Relevant and up-to-date careers advice and events based on students' needs

What it is: A careers and workplace learning platform which provides students with information about possible careers and workplace opportunities.

Difficulty to set up: Easy initially, harder to embed and keep up-to-date

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

"... the project was successful in raising student awareness and providing a good foundation on which next year's students can build. Engaging via the online blog, questionnaire and Facebook pages was good at drawing attention and hopefully gave students insight into how to start pursuing their careers whilst still in university education."

Communication, Community and Belonging

Although technically separate areas we have put communications, community and belonging together. This is because you cannot hope to create a strong sense of community unless you have strong channels of communication. A sense of community is important in such a large university. It helps students feel a sense of belonging with their peers, department and to area of study. It enhances students well-being, engagement and attainment.

1. Trial Slack/Trello or similar software

Level of study: UG, PGT

Key benefits: Reduce email traffic, open up conversations, create tailor made 'groups' for specific discussion

What it is: Slack is a communication platform, that allows you to discuss different topics on different channels, which can be private or open. There's a mobile app, so you can get alerts on your phone and can easily look back over conversations to find the information you need.

Trello is a project management tool, which allows you to share progress on joint projects, keeping all the information on this in one place.

Difficulty to set up: Easy to set up, more difficult to get them embedded

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

A hugely successful project was run in 2015/16 that introduced Slack to a Masters level programme and saw over 116,000 messages exchanged during the year. Success was felt to be contingent on the cohort collective feeling the benefit of using Slack immediately and being able to adapt it to their own needs.

2. Mentoring

Level of study: All

Key benefits: Peer support, connection between levels of study, sense of belonging, developing support networks, sharing expertise

What it is: Mentoring can come about in many guises from general guidance and support to transitioning to university to passing on specific subject skills relevant to your discipline.

Difficulty to set up: Medium- all mentors should receive training and you will need to establish some sort of structure around the mentoring sessions

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

One of our ChangeMakers won an award for her adaptation of the well-established transition mentors scheme to include affiliate students. She was able to draw them into the department so they felt a stronger sense of belonging while introducing them to key skills and knowledge that enabled them to find their feet much quicker. An initial event to get all the mentors and mentees together was felt to be enormously beneficial in developing strong relationships.

3. Awareness Raising Event

Level of study: All

Key benefits: Increased sense of belonging, raised attainment for marginalised groups, increased awareness of the challenges others face, giving a voice to marginalised groups

What it is: Awareness raising events bring some of the issues facing marginalised groups into focus, both celebrating difference and outlining the challenges and opportunities that creating a more inclusive learning environment brings. Examples of awareness raising events include a Mental Health day and an event looking at Disability in Academia.

Difficulty to set up: Easy

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

“An UCL ChangeMakers funded event was held at the end of March 2016, giving the chance to disabled undergraduate, Master's and PhD students to share their experiences to study at UCL. By voicing their universities life experiences, the event delved into the experiences of disabled students at UCL, shedding light on enactment and reception of the apposite legislation, alongside being a window on how they feel the experience can be improved for future disabled students.”

4. Communications/Info Timings

Level of study: All

Key benefits: Targeted, relevant communication

What it is: An audit of when and how key information is delivered – including opportunities that sit outside formal programmes of study – can help strategize targeted and relevant communications delivered at the most optimum time for students to take up the myriad of opportunities on offer intended to enhance their learning journey at UCL.

Difficulty to set up: Easy

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

This project was organised by a group of Masters level students who wanted to make the most of every opportunity available to them while at UCL but who felt that the information they received was often front-loaded when they arrived and therefore forgotten by the time it would have been of use. They also felt UCL had lots of pockets of interesting activities that they often only found out about by word of mouth when it was too late. They investigated using Moodle as a repository of relevant info that students could visit once they were more settled at UCL.

5. Showcasing Brochure

Level of study: All

Key benefits: Attract good students to the course, demonstrates the high calibre of work done on the programme to employers and the outside world

What it is: Creation of a brochure to showcase the excellent work (including research) on your programme.

Difficulty to set up: Medium

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

This project promoted a sense of community and belonging at UCL through the interactions that students have with each other and with staff; and promoting an inclusive learning and research community.

Learning Experience

The student learning experience is affected by the wide variety of interactions and methods of learning that take place, not just in the class room by a lecturer. Projects that fall in this category consider either the learning experience as a whole or particular aspects of it that might enhance learning. They might, for example, explore innovative modes of exploring information and knowledge.

1. Object-based Learning

Level of study: UG, PGT

Key benefits: Active learning, student-centred learning, tangible application of knowledge, unique experiences, contact with UCL's collections of objects and artefacts,

What it is: Object-based learning gives students hands-on experience with unique artefacts. It is a student centred approach to learning that encourages exploration and discussion rather than more traditional didactic delivery methods. Object-based learning doesn't have to be restricted to objects in UCL's extensive collections, we have had a number of projects who have used 3D prints to bring science objects to life.

Difficulty to set up: More challenging, strong collaboration between staff and students is required. However, there is a lot of support available.

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

"For our ChangeMakers project, we focussed on bringing 3D printing into the medical classroom. We wanted to generate a set of 3D printed models that could be used as anatomical and surgical teaching models, and to enable students and teachers to create their own models from medical images. Through close collaboration with clinicians, we have successfully created a set of models of a wide range of organs, including brain, rib and kidney models."

2. Skype Exchanges

Level of study: All

Key benefits: Build connections beyond those directly connected to your studies, practice skills learnt.

What it is: Using Skype to communicate with people not at UCL in order to exchange knowledge and collaborate with people outside UCL. This project was originally conceived of in a language department where a partnership was formed with a university in a country that

spoke that language as a way for students to practice their language skills..However, it has huge potential beyond language exchange.

Difficulty to set up: Easy but harder to embed without strong partnership

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

While it took perseverance to set up the series of exchanges with a university halfway across the world, the benefits and enjoyment experienced by those who undertook the language exchange made it worthwhile.

3. Investigating the Student Experience

Level of study: All

Key Benefits: Deeper understanding of the motivations, expectations and experience of students on your course

What it is: This is an investigatory project and can be done in a variety of ways, including focus groups, interviews and Ketso. Aiming to capture that richness and variety should take precedence in this kind of study.

Difficulty to set up: Easy

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

One ChangeMakers project particularly wanted to focus on how students engaged with each other and with staff in the department as she felt levels of student engagement were low and this was having an impact on the overall student experience.

“...one thing I would suggest is, actually understand who the students are that you are trying to recruit so you can actually propose something that they would be interested in [attending and contributing to.]”

Research

Learning through research and enquiry develops the skills and knowledge that students want to develop at university as well as providing stimulating assessment tasks and building strong links between students at different levels and with staff in the department. Projects in this category find ways to involve or strengthen participating in research for students at all levels of study at UCL.

1. Internal Conference

Level of study: All

Key benefits: Strengthens community across levels of study and with staff, insight into and exposure to current research, presentation and discussion of own research, learn about the process of being a researcher, develop own research interests

What it is: Departmental conferences are held by members of that department for the benefit of students within it. The idea being that PhD students and staff present their research to each other but crucially to taught students. There would also be sessions on being a researcher so that taught students could gain valuable insights into the process of being a researcher in that discipline.

Difficulty to set up: Hard – they can take a lot of organising so it is recommended to do this sort of project in a larger team

Feedback from ChangeMakers who've organised them:

“The conference brought together undergraduate students, Master’s and PhD students, and teaching and research staff. The event aimed to encourage engagement between UCL geographers, no matter where in their geographical careers they are. Conferences are a very important part of life in academia and a key channel for disseminating research; this particular conference is also about ‘hanging out’ together – getting to know your fellow geographers outside the formal spaces of learning and teaching.”

2. Research Methods Podcasts

Level of study: All

Key benefits: Insight into what research is going in the department, strengthens community, insight into the research process, sense of community, understanding of research methods

What it is: Students interview members of research staff in their department to find out more about the research they are doing. These interviews are recorded and uploaded for others to

hear. There is a strong focus on research methods. As many students as you like can be involved in interviewing researchers so that more students get the opportunity to meet with staff in the department and develop interviewing skills. Topics and staff to be interviewed can be arranged around topics covered in lectures and embedded on Moodle to add another layer of richness to course material.

Difficulty to set up: Easy

Useful Resources

Quick guides available on the UCL Teaching & Learning Portal:

Using Proformas for Feedback:

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/using_proformas_for_feedback_quick_guide_0.pdf

Helping Students Understand Assessment:

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/helping_students_understand_assessment_quick_guide.pdf

Academic Writing Toolkit:

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/20161207-ucl-academic_writing-v4.pdf

Meet your Researcher:

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/meet_your_researcher.pdf

NUS Benchmarking tools

Assessment & Feedback:

<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/assessment-and-feedback-benchmarking-tool>

Learning Resources:

<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/learning-resources-benchmarking-tool>

The Digital Student Experience:

http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6140/1/Jisc_NUS_student_experience_benchmarking_tool.pdf

Academic Support:

<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/academic-support-benchmarking-tool>

Map my Programme - University of Greenwich:

<https://sites.google.com/site/mapmyprogramme/home>

