UCL

UCL Equity and Inclusion Plan

2020-21

Vision

We aim to acknowledge, understand, and tackle structural inequities and unjust social power imbalances that affect our communities across the institution.

This means recognising how we got here and what needs to be done to ensure equity, inclusion and belonging for those who are not systemically privileged by our society.

Introduction

In the 2020-21 academic year, everyone at UCL will continue to be affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the measures that UCL is having to take in response to it, but each person is affected differently. For many in the UCL community, the detrimental impact of the pandemic will be situational, marginal, and temporary. For others, the disadvantage caused by COVID-19 is being layered on top of existing structural and historical inequalities; it may be multi-dimensional and cumulative.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a high level of uncertainty for our students and staff and UCL has had to rapidly alter how we deliver education, undertake research and keep the university operating smoothly, with more of our community now unavoidably dispersed globally across different continents and time-zones and working in many varied circumstances.

This plan sets out the institutional equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) priorities for 2020-21. It maintains and adapts long-term UCL strategies for advancing equity and inclusion while also proactively working to ensure that marginalised and already disadvantaged members of the UCL community are not further challenged by the pandemic. It aims to help us focus on what is important in this period of rapid change.

An overarching theme that is foremost in this plan is responding to and supporting the calls for change from our students and staff as part of the Black Lives Matter movement. We take incredibly seriously our responsibility to be race-conscious, anti-racist, and to challenge anti-Blackness and we will put in financial resources to support this work.

Due to the expansive remit of the EDI agenda, the plan should not be seen as an exhaustive list of aims but rather as an umbrella plan to complement other current strategies and initiatives, building on what already exists and guiding what we need to do differently or in an enhanced way over 12 months.

Definitions

'Equality, diversity and inclusion' (EDI) can be a nebulous concept. This plan, therefore, sets a clearly defined approach and framework for pursuing equity and inclusion in 2020-21 based on the following definitions:

Equity: Although both concepts promote fairness, equality achieves this by treating everyone the same regardless of need, while equity achieves this by treating people differently dependent on need. In 2020-21, UCL will openly take an equity-based approach by targeting resources to those who are most disadvantaged by Covid-19

Inclusion: Inclusion is being attentive to the impact of social identities and putting the most disadvantaged members of our community at the centre of design and planning. What works for these groups will automatically benefit everyone. Inclusion values 'difference' as an asset but understands that it can require more thought, time and resources to meaningfully accommodate it.

Responsibilities

Whilst this is a strategic institutional plan, equity and inclusion are everybody's responsibility. This plan encourages and empowers all members of our community to do their part and work together to deliver impact. For example, in the context of COVID-19, proactively advancing equity and inclusion in 2020-21 can be demonstrated through:

- **Individual-level:** through a particular emphasis on collegiality and being adaptable, supportive to others, and collaborative, rather than competitive. Ensuring online education provision and interaction follow inclusive best practice. Developing one's knowledge of inequity and social injustice.

- **Team and management level:** not having unrealistic expectations of others, who may be struggling with additional challenges created or exacerbated by the pandemic.

- **Department-level:** Having a willingness to 'level up' and emulate and engage with good equity and inclusion practice from other parts of UCL. Ensuring those from marginalised backgrounds have a voice and sense of belonging. Valuing and celebrating EDI contributions and activity.

- **Faculty-level:** Embedding EDI into strategic planning and resourcing.

- **Institutional level:** senior leaders are exemplars and proactively advance equity and inclusion. Systems, cultures, and processes that contribute to inequity and exclusion are actively challenged and dismantled.

6 pillars of equity and inclusion

There are 6 pillars of the Equity and Inclusion Plan for 2020-21:

- **Hardwiring equity and inclusion into UCL**

- **Delivering an equitable and inclusive educational environment**

- **Empowering everyone to advance equity and inclusion**

- **Mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on inequality**

- **Taking bold positive action to level-up opportunities**

- **Creating a greater culture of accountability**

Hardwiring equity and inclusion into UCL

We will work towards embedding and mainstreaming equity and inclusion as an integral part of the way UCL thinks and functions. We will do this through better utilisation and more wide-spread, systemic sharing of data and insights and by building the infrastructure for more equity-based decision-making, so that it is integrated into our planning, processes, and culture. The voices of diverse staff and students is integral to this work.

Priorities

- Produce faculty / professional service division and Vice Provost-level data dashboards to enable holistic EDI insights and actions to be incorporated into strategic annual planning.

- Make EDI data easily available to key stakeholders by producing the architecture for self-service access, ensure insight is informing interventions and is linked to accountability.

- Create and embed effective and meaningful tools and resources for equity-based decision-making at all levels of UCL, to aid decisions with significant consequences being taken at pace.

- Ensure the institutional EDI charter marks that UCL holds are true vehicles of culture change by making the data more transparent and actions better integrated and owned at a local level.

- Develop a holistic EDI self-assessment framework and accompanying workshop for departments, to enable them to benchmark their overall level of inclusivity and develop targeted action in response to issues identified.

- Undertake a review of EDI governance to ensure there is meaningful oversight of progress and develop new KPIs to be scrutinised. Develop new

mechanisms for 'closing the loop' and faculties/departments being able to feedback on local developments.

- A review of diversity within committees to be spearheaded by the Chief Operating Officer and new guidance and expectations to be published subsequently to ensure decision-making at UCL is fully diverse and representative.

- Embed an institutional programme of work on digital accessibility to ensure the online environment is accessible for Disabled members of our community.

Case study: Digital Accessibility Project

ISD is leading a two-year project to identify inaccessible digital resources including UCL websites, online learning resources, and application platforms. The objective is to either make improvements or establish improvement plans with the relevant resource owners.

Making UCL's digital estate more accessible for all and dismantling unnecessary barriers for Disabled students and staff has become more important than ever within the context of current circumstances. Adapting our ways of working as an institution has highlighted what is possible and has shifted practice to what many thought could never happen.

Delivering an equitable and inclusive educational environment

The educational environment includes pedagogical approaches, academic support as well as co-curricular activity and student support and welfare. Our students are already experiencing deep unexpected changes and it is critical that no member of our community gets left behind or is further marginalised or disadvantaged by differences in the way UCL operates in 2020-21.

Priorities

- Work towards more consistency of departmental implementation of equity and inclusion support and initiatives. Currently, engagement, sensitivity, and proactivity vary. Enable best practice to be shared more consistently and frequently.

- Ensure international students are empowered to have a collective voice when not on campus through a newly re-energised International Student Network supported by the Student Union.

- Ensure Student Support and Welfare (SSW) is sufficiently resourced to have the capacity to support the wellbeing and mental health of an increased student population through one-to-one appointments.

- Continue to expand culturally aware counselling provision through hiring more counsellors from ethnically diverse backgrounds and SSW staff receiving training.

- Eliminate the BAME Degree Awarding Gap by 2024, review plans in light of a new educational operating model created by the pandemic, ensure greater student engagement in the project, and launch a new £250,000 fund to support departments to undertake initiatives.

- Continue to progress on institutional activity on improving employment and development opportunities for Teaching Fellows.

- Recruit a cohort of Student Success Advisors and ensure recruits are from diverse backgrounds.

- Financially support Student Union clubs and societies to create a greater sense of belonging for marginalised groups.

- Work with Disabled students to implement any necessary improvements to ensure policies and practices meet best practice and that teaching, learning and student life at UCL are inclusive and accessible.

- Upskill our community to have sensitive conversations about race and particularly anti-Black racism and to develop meaningful local anti-racism actions in full partnership with Black students and staff.

- Forge closer connections between central EDI and student-led social justice activist groups so that the student voice is informing UCL EDI planning and communications, as staff networks currently do.

Case study: Transition Mentors

Every first year undergraduate at UCL is matched to a Transition Mentor – a paid, trained second or third year student who is doing the same degree programme. Mentors meet their students once a week in groups of eight throughout the first term. This year mentoring will be held online via Microsoft Teams to be inclusive for those who are not on campus for term 1. Transition mentors can give guidance on academic topics, arrange socials and can direct their students to any UCL support services that they might need.

Case study: BAME Degree Awarding Gap

For the past 2 years, a project team has been working to address the BAME awarding gap at UCL. Our data shows that 25% of BAME UK students receive a 1st class degree vs 32% of White students. The project encompassed an investigation into the gap at UCL and raising awareness and building advocacy and expertise across UCL, including through the creation of academic Degree Awarding Gap Leads in each faculty.

The team developed UCL's Inclusive Curriculum Health Check so that departments could reflect on the inclusivity of their programmes for every aspect of the academic cycle. They also piloted a Student Curriculum Partners review project, whereby students review the inclusivity - particularly concerning race and ethnicity – of teaching materials, such as programme handbooks, module guides, and reading lists.

In 2020-21, a £250,000 fund is being launched to support departments to undertake projects to address their degree awarding gap.
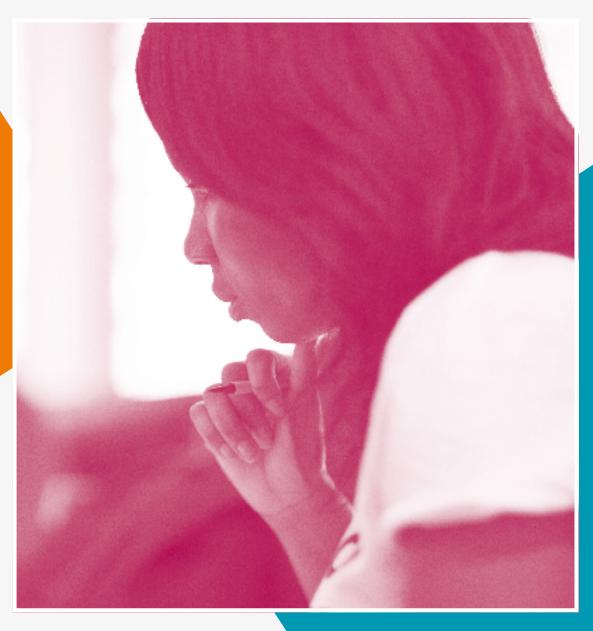
Empowering everyone to advance equity and inclusion

To be change-makers we need to listen to those who experience disadvantage and also equip our community with the skills and knowledge to take action. We will foster a community of people engaged in equity and inclusion activity and support and value the work they do.

Priorities

- Roll-out out active bystander intervention workshops to all new students and develop and implement a refresher course for existing students.

- Pilot and roll-out the 'Science of Inclusion' implicit bias online training for teaching staff.

- Fully integrate EDI into leadership development, through bespoke programmes such as the BAME Emerging Leaders programme and by integrating EDI into core programmes such as the Head of Department induction programme, Lead@UCL, and rolling-out a new Inclusive Leadership programme.

- Roll-out a strategic approach to delivering EDI staff training in faculties and departments that features training in the context of other strategic EDI interventions and expectations so that training is not a box-ticking 'solution'.

- Ensure a wide-spread baseline understanding of EDI and the obligations of the Equality Act 2010 in the context of COVID-19 through the delivery of large-scale webinars.

- Produce departmental Athena SWAN data dashboards that local teams can easily access and incorporate into their submissions, create supporting resources and templates to simplify the process of developing submissions.

- Create a new EDI Community of Practice, including Students' Union UCL that will bring together all key stakeholders to collaborate, to share best practice and enhance EDI delivery.

- Develop a model for recognising and rewarding our community for their EDI contributions. Change does not happen without individuals going the extra mile and the extent of EDI volunteering and activism should be understood, acknowledged and seen to be valued.

- Strengthen business partnering between central EDI, the Vice Deans of EDI, departmental EDI leads (including Inclusion Leads) for more cohesion, resource pooling and impact.

- Improve central EDI communications and student engagement through implementation of a communications and social media plan.

Mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on inequality

As a community, we can see that supporting each other requires us to understand how unequally we are being affected by the virus and the measures that society and UCL is taking against it. Socio-economic, gendered, racialised, and disability inequity has been evident from the student admissions process through to the impact on research careers and how they are structured.

Priorities

- Ensure fair student access by admitting all 1st year students who met the terms of their original UCL offer and honouring the outcomes of appeals.

- Increase the financial support available through means-tested bursaries for one year and help address digital disadvantage through the provision of equipment to those that need it

- Revise policies and procedures to take into account the gendered impact of COVID-19, particularly concerning caring responsibilities, research contracts, careers and academic promotion.

- Create and evaluate a pilot institutional carers fund. Additionally, undertaking a strategic piece on re-imagining childcare provision at UCL for both staff and students.

- Financially support and raise the profile of UCL research and engagement activity that is focused on addressing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities.

- Undertake a joint Students' Union and EDI team research project into the experiences of Chinese and East Asian heritage students at UCL, in the context of a rise in levels of xenophobia.

- Assess the impact of changes to ways of working to ensure it does not create a further disadvantage to Disabled staff, including mitigating against exacerbating pre-existing mental health conditions.

- Develop new policies, procedures, and improved knowledge within our support services in response to increasing levels of domestic violence caused by lockdowns.

- Develop an understanding of how LGBTQ+ students and staff have been impacted by lockdown, utilising UCL research which highlights how increased isolation and the need to remain closeted is leading to poorer mental health for LGBTQ+ people.

Taking bold positive action to level-up opportunities

Positive action is the legal term for taking specific steps to meet a group's particular needs, lessen a disadvantage they might experience or increase participation and representation. We do this at UCL through the widening participation agenda and in employment through initiatives for staff. In 2020-21 we will enhance our approaches.

Priorities

- Continue to implement contextual admissions for students via the Access UCL scheme.

- Apply for external funding to develop new schemes to boost diversity at the doctoral level and advance other approaches such as working closely with Doctoral Training Programmes.

- Ensure new policies and workforce planning measures adopted as part of UCL's COVID-19 response offer opportunities for BAME and Disabled staff and applicants, for example through secondments, guaranteed interview schemes and the creation of talent pools.

- Establish a task-and-finish group to agree and oversee implementation of a strategy for ensuring UCL East academic appointments are diverse.

- Implement the Accelerate to Leadership programme to increase the proportion of senior BAME staff and implement a new coaching intervention to provide targeted career support for BAME staff to readdress imbalances created by White privilege

- Expand central EDI pipeline interventions, such as Fair Recruitment Specialists, B-MEntor (mentoring scheme for BAME staff) and the Inclusive Advocacy programme (sponsorship scheme for BAME staff); and implement a new online system to improve quality assurance and integrate the schemes into leadership development programmes.

- Explore in detail the ethnicity pay gap for staff and take targeted, strategic action in response.

Research Opportunity Scholarships

The Research Opportunity Scholarships (ROS) have been established to create opportunities for Black and minority ethnic doctoral students to undertake fully-funded PhDs at UCL. The scholarships also include additional support with research costs and mentoring support and advocacy. Our second cohort of ROS scholars are due to begin their PhDs in October 2020.

Creating a greater culture of accountability

Where poor and unacceptable behaviours exist at UCL, we will continue to challenge these and improve our ways of holding people to account. In the past two years, we have made inroads in addressing sexual misconduct. Our focus for 2020-21 will be on ensuring UCL communities are educated about race and racism, that people have the tools to be anti-racist and that any form of racial harassment or racialisation is prevented, challenged or effectively responded to.

Priorities

- Launch the next phase of the 'Full Stop' campaign and accompanying activity focused on anti-racism, support for reporting racial harassment and greater accountability for perpetrating racist behaviour.

- Ensure that 95% of Report + Support advisor requests are responded to in 5 working days and that there are trained and confident Dignity Advisers in every department.

- Transparently publish annual data on bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct reports and actions taken.

- Design and implement a new Intervention Framework for departments that are experiencing or perpetuating negative EDI behaviours, such as non-inclusive cultures, conflict, creating reports from students on EDI issues and so forth.

- Create and appoint a new Pro-Vice Provost of Equity and Inclusion to provide academic leadership on EDI and who has the senior academic authority to hold others to account where appropriate.

- Address the legacy of eugenics at UCL through institutional implementation of the recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry into the History of Eugenics at UCL.

Report + Support and the Full Stop Campaign

The EDI team worked with colleagues across UCL and UCL Students' Union in 2019 to launch Report + Support, an online reporting platform for bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. Along with its accompanying campaign, 'Full Stop', it has resulted in an increase in the number of reports and actions being taken to prevent and respond to unacceptable behaviour. Increased reporting is essential to effective prevention. During the first year, 376 reports were received.

We regard an initial increase in disclosures and reports as an indicator of improving trust and confidence in the reporting process and its importance in instigating an effective response. Responses have included informal resolutions such as management conversations about appropriate behaviour, targeted communications and training. Formal responses have included disciplinary and environmental investigations.

Success Measures

We will undertake work in 2020-21, in partnership with staff equity networks, students and Student Union UCL, to agree a set of key performance indicators on EDI. These will be published transparently in an annual data and performance report from July 2021.

Obvious measures we will be looking towards are:

- Widening participation admissions targets in respect of disadvantaged groups.

- Degree awarding gap data on progress against the aim of eliminating the gap between BAME students and White students by 2024 and Black students by 2030-31.

- Qualitative results from student survey data disaggregated by equity-target groups (New to UCL, Student Experience Survey, National Student Survey, the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey) and also staff survey data.

- The number and proportion of new staff (academic, research and senior professional services) recruited by equity-target groups.

- Gender and ethnicity pay gap data.

- Staff promotions by equity-target groups.

- Annual monitoring data on reports and case outcomes on bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.

- Analytics on engagement with EDI communications.

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