

**To: New PGT students**

**Subject: What UCL teaching and learning will be like in 2021-22**

Dear UCL DIS offer holders,

We're delighted that you've chosen UCL, and the Department of Information Studies and we hope to warmly welcome you to the Department this autumn.

Though there is still some uncertainty about how the coronavirus pandemic will continue to affect us all, we are planning an exciting academic year for you and I wanted to share some of the details.

### **Our plans for teaching and learning**

Our UCL education in 2021-22 will be campus based, as we strongly believe in the huge benefits of attending university in person. The last year has taught us a lot about how to support our students' academic progress with digital technology and many students have told us that they have enjoyed the flexibility of online lectures and having access to content and activities that they can work through at their own pace. Learning in this way also prepares our students for the increasingly digital-first environment you'll encounter after graduation. However, students and staff alike agree that meaningful face to face education is the priority, so that they can interact more easily with fellow students and teachers and be part of a community that is alive with research and academic scholarship.

[As previously announced](#), in line with most UK universities, all our programmes will be a blend of in person and online teaching and learning, designed to support students to progress and succeed academically. Our 'blended by design' approach responds to the feedback of our students – and builds on the continuous refinement of UCL education over the last year.

Across UCL, most small group teaching - including seminars, workshops, pc clusters - will be in person and most of your large group teaching will be online. Online, students will learn through a mix of interactive live sessions and engaging digital learning activities that you can work through at your own pace. Most of your written assessments and examinations will also be completed online on our bespoke assessment platform or our learning platform, Moodle, through a mix of course work, take home assignments or exams.

For the MA Publishing, where you take all your core modules in Term 1, face to face teaching on campus will take place on Fridays, with any synchronous online delivery on Thursdays. For Publishing Contexts, the introductory core module everyone takes in the week beginning Oct 4<sup>th</sup>, we are planning 3 days of on-campus delivery, and 2 days of online teaching. Confirmation of the programme for this module will follow shortly.

Our students and staff place huge value on in-person interaction with fellow students in and outside their academic programme, and you will have many opportunities for informal learning, networking and connecting with your fellow students, on campus and online. The Students' Union is arranging a comprehensive programme of in-person events for the new term, including all of our club and society activity. In addition, we have been working closely with UCL Libraries to make sure you have

good study facilities on campus and the physical and digital materials you need for independent study and analysis, developing your skills as an active researcher.

## **Term One**

Term One begins on 27 September 2021. Induction activities in our Department will begin on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September and you will be receiving more information later in the summer. Teaching on our programmes begin on Monday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of October. We are planning for our campus to be open to all students for the start of the new academic year. We expect you to come to campus for face-to-face teaching and it will not be possible to study entirely online. As there may be continuing coronavirus travel restrictions in some countries at the beginning of term, we have planned to minimize possible disruption by running department induction activities online.

## **International students**

Please ensure that you plan your arrival in the UK so that you can attend your on campus activities.

Currently, everyone planning to travel to the UK, whether vaccinated or not, must still follow the [traffic light system of rules](#). We are continuing to develop our support package for international students, but we can confirm that if you are an international student joining us for Term One from a country where hotel quarantine in the UK is required, you will be able to apply for a means-tested financial contribution towards your quarantine costs. In addition, students who are in quarantine or are self-isolating will have remote access to our support and wellbeing service, while students in UCL student accommodation will receive assistance from the student residences team. UCL's [International Student Support webpages](#) have more information on the advice and support available as you prepare to arrive to London, as well as [orientation activities](#) available to you as a new or returning international student. The traffic light system is likely to change before September and we will update you as soon as possible.

[International students at UCL on all visas and of all nationalities will be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine](#). Students who have received one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine overseas that is also available in the UK should receive the same vaccine for their second dose here. Students who have received the first dose of a vaccine *not* available in the UK should [contact a GP \(doctor\) surgery](#) when they arrive and inform them which vaccination they received as early as possible. If the vaccine they received for their first dose is not available in the UK, the most similar alternative should be offered. Students who have not received *any* COVID-19 vaccine dose before arriving in the UK are eligible to be vaccinated here and must register with a GP as soon as possible. This guidance is likely to be updated nearer to the start of term and updates will be provided in future communications. [Find out more about student vaccinations](#).

We recognise that some students may not be able to join us in London at the very start of the year, because of continuing coronavirus travel restrictions. If this affects you, in most programmes we will be able to support you as best we can to start your UCL studies remotely for a short period of time until you are able to join us in person. Please let us know if you will not be able to travel to London for the very start of the academic year.

Please note that current UK Government guidelines state that if you are a returning student cannot travel to the UK before 27 September, your existing Tier 4/Student Visa will become invalid. If you can travel to the UK at a later date, you will be required to apply for a new Tier 4/Student Visa. [Find out more about student visas on our website](#).

## **Joining UCL for the first time or joining us in person for the first time**

From now until the start of the academic year, look out for regular emails from the UCL Welcome team, which will guide you through the process of becoming a UCL student, including enrolment,

visas, fees and funding, accommodation, getting to know UCL and our great city, making the most of all the opportunities there are to develop your networks, skills and interests.

### **Your safety**

Our blended model of education will help us adapt through the coronavirus pandemic. By conducting most large group teaching online and limiting some class sizes, we are confident we can continue some interactive face to face learning, even if social distancing is required at some point in the year.

A resurgence of coronavirus is always a possibility at some point in the next academic year. However, we have robust contingency plans, based on our experience and the resources we developed this year, and we are confident that you will be able to engage with your education with us whatever the circumstances.

Find out more about the [safety measures we're putting in place on campus and what you can do to help keep our community safe.](#)

**Professor Elizabeth Shepherd** – Head of Department

**Dr Daniel Boswell** – Director of Studies

**Dr Sam Rayner** – MA Publishing