



THE UCL POLICY LAB AT A GLANCE

Overview

The UCL Policy Lab is a vibrant hub that harnesses the unique convening power of a global university to support those who lead social, political and economic change.

Launched in June 2022, the Lab has already become widely recognised as the place where senior politicians, think tank heads, prominent campaigners, writers and artists, progressive business leaders and grassroots activists meet, develop connections, enhance their skills and knowledge, and learn to work effectively together for the common good.

In a profile in March 2024, the *New Statesman* magazine described a major event at the Lab as the occasion on which “those shaping Britain’s future assembled.”

The Lab’s approach is based on three key elements:

- (1) its status as a safe, non-factional space for all kinds of groups across policymaking to come together;
- (2) the expertise and reputation of its core staff team, who have an internationally-recognised track-record of building, supporting and sustaining complex collaborations across political life;
- (3) the research, training and broader educational support offered by the Departments of Economics and Political Science and other parts of UCL which can bring the very best new ideas directly to those engaged in leading policymaking in the UK and across the world.

Ethos

UCL is London’s global university. We are rooted in our community and look outward to the world. With almost two hundred years of disruptive thinking behind us, we work with people of all political persuasions and none to try to change the world for good.

Only two years old, the UCL Policy Lab works in the best of this tradition. We take the most exciting ideas from economics, political science and beyond and make the available to political parties, social movements, businesses, philanthropic foundations and the community at large.

We seek collaborators of varying political persuasions, listen to their views, try to appreciate their challenges and help them find answers that will work in the interests of us all.

We especially focus on the need to break down barriers between people and help people collaborate more effectively where they can or learn how to disagree well where they cannot.

We do not help people campaign in elections, but we do help people of all kinds reflect on their advocacy strategies and what they mean for the health of our democracy.

Events

Since our launch in spring 2022, the UCL Policy Lab has organised scores of events, ranging from large-scale public celebrations of the very best in policymaking to expert panel discussions, from packed-out

public events in UCL's largest venues to intimate deep dives into some of the most complex issues of our time.

All of our work is done in collaboration with policymakers from outside academia.

We work with politicians from all sides including senior cabinet members from the Conservative Party, shadow ministers from the Labour Party and representatives from the Liberal Democrats.

In 2023, the UCL Policy Lab also hosted a full programme of events at both the Labour and Conservative party conferences.

Just some examples of UCL Policy Lab events include:

- Senior members of the cabinet and their policy teams have joined us to discuss social connection and levelling up.
- Senior members of the shadow cabinet and their policy teams have joined us to discuss relations with China, the future of Artificial Intelligence and the chances of reforming public services.
- Leading former senior civil servants have led investigations into the future of UK foreign policy
- Prominent economists have debated the role of central banks in tackling inflation.
- Members of Parliament have joined us to argue about the role of equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives and the potential challenges of "cancel culture".
- We have joined by experts from Onward and the Institute for Fiscal Studies to discuss regional inequalities and how to tackle them.
- We have analysed the future of refugee and asylum policy with Labour and Conservative Members of Parliament and their teams

Partnerships

The UCL Policy Lab has deep collaboration and sustained partnerships in its DNA.

We were founded by a belief that by bringing together extraordinary expertise and everyday experience we can solve some of our biggest shared challenges. We believe a key part of this approach is a commitment to collaboration across differences and the development of mutual understanding.

As a result, all of the UCL Policy Lab's projects, programmes and events are conducting in formal and informal partnership with external organisations and institutions. This helps embed our work in the lives of people across the UK.

Representatives of the following organisations are just some of those who regularly partner with the UCL Policy Lab:

- Camden Council
- Camerados
- The Centre for Cities
- Citizens UK
- Coram
- The Future Governance Forum
- The Institute for Fiscal Studies
- The Institute for Government
- The Institute for Public Policy Research
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Local Trust
- Locality

- London Councils
- Metro Dynamics
- More in Common
- Neighbourly Lab
- NESTA
- Onward
- Our Future
- Power to Change
- Public First
- The Refugee, Asylum and Migration Policy
- The Resolution Foundation
- University of Arts London
- World Resources Institute

Projects and Publications

The UCL Policy Lab conducts its own research projects, working with academic experts from the Departments of Economics and Political Science and from other parts of UCL.

Major projects currently include an investigation into the ways in which policymakers might better respond to the challenges of inequality and social justice, called *Ordinary Hope*, and a year-long collaboration with the This Day Foundation investigating how we can more effectively network think tanks, campaign groups, community organisations, researchers and senior politicians, called the Progressive Ecosystem.

Working with our partners and UCL colleagues on these projects, the UCL Policy Lab regularly publishes its own independent research and supports the launch of related research from others. This work aims to capture the breadth of UCL research and expertise, connecting world-class thinking with grassroots experience to help shape critical policy debates.

Alongside major publications, the UCL Policy Lab publishes a well-regarded quarterly magazine, now on its sixth edition, which profiles both UCL researchers and some of the leading policymakers in the UK and overseas. This work has launched over 104 news stories.

The Lab also has a rapidly growing a social media following, with the Lab and its Director having over 12,000 followers on X.

Recent examples of original UCL Policy Lab research publications include:

- Alex Hartman, Moritz Marbach, Judith Spirig, *Lighting the way: Supporting city and regional leaders to create positive outcomes for people in the immigration system*, 2023.
- Moazzam Malik (ed.), *The Future of UK Foreign Policy*, 2024.
- Marc Stears and Luke Tryl, *The Respect Agenda*, 2023.
- Marc Stears and Graeme Cooke (eds.), *Ordinary Hope: A New Way of Changing Our Country Together*, 2024.
- Tim Soutphommasane, Marc Stears, Luke Tryl and Anoushchka Rajah, *Finding a Balance: How to Ensure that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is for Everyone*, 2024.

Supporters

Since our inception, the UCL Policy Lab has aimed to work in partnership with the philanthropic foundations that underpin so much of the very best thinking in policymaking and social change in the UK and overseas.

We are immensely grateful to all those who have supported us.

Recent examples of supporters of UCL Policy Lab research and convening include:

- Arts and Humanities Research Council
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Local Trust
- The Refugee and Migrant Policy Project
- This Day Foundation
- Unbound Philanthropy

Team

UCL Policy Lab is led by its Director, Marc Stears, who has had a storied career at the forefront of both politics and academia.

Initially a professor of politics at the University of Oxford, Marc went on to be chief speechwriter to the UK Labour Party, under the leadership of Ed Miliband, the CEO of the New Economics Foundation think tank and the founder of the Sydney Policy Lab, in Sydney, Australia. He is also the author of many books. His latest, co-written with the political strategist, Tom Baldwin, is *England: Seven Myths that Changed a Country and How to Set them Straight*, which is published by Bloomsbury next month.

In addition to Marc, the core team consists of James Baggaley, as head of communications; engagement, operations manager, Phoebe Couzens; project managers, Alisha Iyer and Jake Cohen; and a junior communications officer currently being appointed.

The core team is supported by two Academic Co-Directors from the Departments of Economics and Political Science, Prof. Marcos Vera Hernandez and Prof Christian Schuster.