



# UCL



UCL Faculty of Population Health Sciences

# 2022-2027 Strategic Plan



# Vision and approach



To maintain its top global rankings in academic public health and clinical sciences, the UCL Faculty of Population Health Sciences (FPHS) relies on deep and diverse expertise in several fields directed toward a common cause, the current and future goal to which it is committed: to become the pre-eminent place in the world for population health research and education. This is the best way to deliver outstanding research and teaching for human health and wellbeing, at home and worldwide.

We want to go further. A devastating pandemic, geopolitical insecurity, drastic inequality, and the looming spectre of climate change show why it is vital to set high standards. The Faculty aims to employ its unique and cosmopolitan resources and talent most effectively to make a difference: to contend with the underlying factors that cause ill health and create the potential for improving it.

The FPHS is composed of eight academic departments: Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care, Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, Institute for Global Health, Global Business School for Health, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Institute for Women's Health, Institute of Health Informatics, Institute of Clinical Trials and Methodology and Institute of Cardiovascular Science. As each institute pursues its goals,

keeping the unique character and intense focus that leads to innovation, breakthrough and world-class performance, the faculty as a whole seeks to be greater than the sum of its parts. It is bolstered by and makes use of its external partnerships, internal networks, distributed knowledge and collective expertise drawn from the greater body of the university, teachers and students and researchers alike.

We seek to tackle complex challenges by taking a whole “life course” perspective, that is, a truly holistic view. Through preconception health and into childhood, growth and aging: obstacles and events in one stage of life are influenced and determined by another. We set our strategy by the light of the life course because we see our work in the biological, environmental and psychosocial aspects running through the whole of an individual's life. In this way we seek positive impact on health outcomes. It means we value equity in the opportunity to enjoy good health.

The strategy below sets out where we think it is important to engage and build on both existing strengths and developing expertise, where to find connections, how best to share complementary knowledge among disciplines, with external partners, and across FPHS and UCL as a whole—and how to do so in order to maximise impact.

# Ambitions



The strategy will be supported by thorough further analysis of existing capabilities within the faculty and by more detailed and extensive annexes. It will continue to evolve during implementation and be guided by a monitoring plan assessing our progress. Our intention is to follow the university's mission of working together across disciplines to solve the world's biggest problems.

We intend to use an existing in-house coordination and facilitating body, UCL's Health of the Public, to advance these efforts. Following the university lead set out by the UCL 2034 plan and the UCL 2022-27 Strategy, we are placing emphasis and resources to address three major challenges from a population health sciences perspective—that is, inequality, climate crisis and pandemics / health security—and apply the specialist know-how and resources employed by our

faculty institutes, such as in data science, trial study cohorts, and molecular biology, to disease areas.

Our strategy takes shape in 10 ambitions built around education, research, enterprise, partnerships and people, focusing on what is specific and unique to UCL. Together the ambitions serve as signposts for the near future to help the Faculty's colleagues and students—its key asset, its people—lift the institution as a whole and position it for success.

## Ten Ambitions in 5 areas

1. Education
2. Research
3. Enterprise and Innovation
4. Partnerships
5. People



# Ambitions in Education



FPHS has grown its student body considerably and maintained quality even as it launched significant new initiatives. We see future targeted growth in our disciplines, particularly in undergraduate education, and further development for professionals seeking to continue their education.

**Ambition 1: An attractive and thriving education portfolio is not a wish; it is a requirement. Delivering it requires support at all levels of study.**

## We will:

1. Provide for the successful launch and initial years of the UCL Global Business School for Health and our new online programmes by end of 2022/23, including staffing, infrastructure, marketing and events to attract and support students.
2. Launch the first in a series of new undergraduate programmes relevant to

- the Faculty's disciplines and grand challenge focus by 2025/26; this will be supported by robust market research.
3. Launch our first doctorates geared for professionals, and support short-course and executive education for professionals, both online and in person, by 2024.
4. Review the Faculty's entire portfolio of education by end of 2023/24 academic year, based on: continuing academic and professional relevance; quality outcomes; student experience; and financial viability. We do so with the view that review and renewal are vital for a thriving education portfolio.
5. Further align our education programme portfolio with our research and strategic priorities, with the Faculty and education leadership in departments together taking a proactive commissioning role of new education activities.

# Ambitions in Education

Ambition 2: Planned growth in student numbers should be met by refreshed academic and professional service support structures complemented by specific efforts to improve the quality of our students' experience.

## We will:

1. Align professional service staff support with specific types of students such as postgraduate taught, postgraduate research, undergraduate, online programmes and short courses to ensure consistency of support and expertise available to students and staff. The alignment should promote consistency in roles, responsibilities and actions of academic and PS staff in education and be completed by end of 2022/23.
2. Organise professional service staff around northern (cluster around Euston Road and Torrington Place), southern (around 30 Guilford Street) and eastern (at UCL East) hubs. This is meant to start enhancing the learning and social spaces for our students from different departments.
3. Develop a staff cadre led by our new Student Experience Manager and invest in advisor roles to give students a high level of wraparound support for learning. This is also meant to support academic staff and help them focus on their students' academic progression in their role as personal tutors.
4. Press forward with efforts to eliminate awarding gaps between distinct groups of students. We will promote inclusivity and well-being, identity and belonging. We will also review assessment, feedback strategies, and careers support for all students.
5. Organise all PhD candidates into well-defined cross-Faculty thematic programmes of study, of around 20-30 students each, by end of 2022/23 academic year, with appropriate training opportunities and support targeted towards these groups.



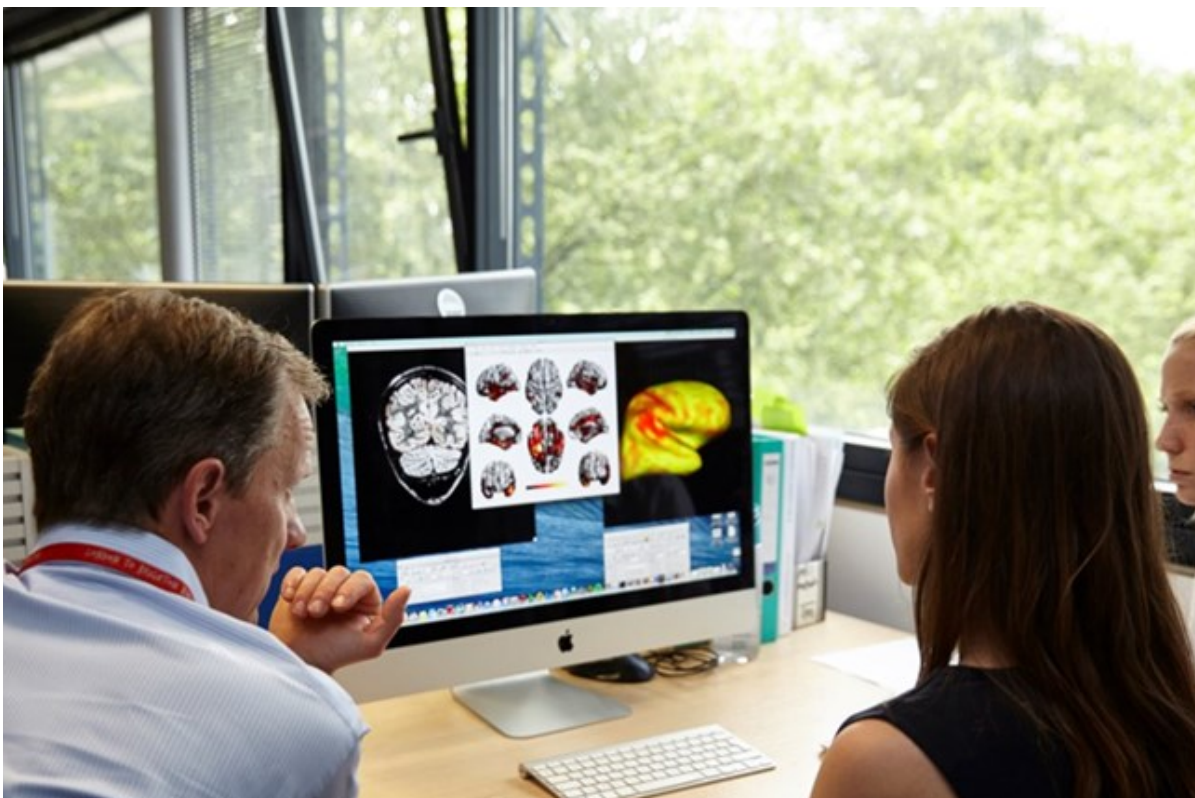


# Ambitions in Education

Ambition 3: FPHS is a teaching faculty at a learning institution. We want to support staff to deliver education of the highest quality for all our programmes.

We will:

1. Continue consolidating staff into programme and module teams where leadership is clear, supported, and where responsibilities are fairly shared (these should be fully established by the end of 2022/23 academic year).
2. Ensure education activities are part of the portfolio of all academic, research and teaching staff—at all levels of career development—by establishing a fair workload allocation model. Such a model will be trialled on a representative group of staff in 2022/23 and rolled out in 2023/24.
3. Ensure all staff involved in education are given protected time to pursue professional development and training in education and research supervision, such as Fellowships of the Higher Education Academy. Results should see measurable improvements in teaching and supervision quality and survey scores, as well as in educational outputs such as papers, textbooks, international education collaborations and innovative learning techniques.
4. Ensure that appraisal and promotion processes recognise success in education. Measuring outcomes should be reviewed with this in mind and reflected in guidance to appraisers and promotion panels.



# Ambitions in Research



Our world-leading research, as reflected in annual in-depth reviews by UK higher education funding bodies, is diverse and impactful: it covers the whole spectrum of inquiry including basic laboratory research, clinical and translational work, and epidemiological and social science programmes. Our 2021 Research Excellence Framework case studies in genetic diagnosis in clinical medicine and communication and non-communicable diseases in population health are exemplars.

Priorities for the Faculty of Population Health Sciences build on and support strategic goals and initiatives from each of our eight academic departments: Cardiovascular Sciences, Child Health, Clinical Trials, Epidemiology and Health Care, Health Informatics, Global Business School for Health, Global Health, and Women's Health.

With these interests at heart, we need to further develop our collective strengths and expertise, innovate in methods and disciplines, and reinforce areas of strategic importance. We have identified three major challenges: inequalities, climate crisis, and pandemics / health security. Our ambition is to address these through research, innovation and enterprise. We will innovate

in methods and disciplines: using our leading capabilities in data science, trials, cohort studies, qualitative research, and implementation science, we will deliver high quality science and maximise our impact.

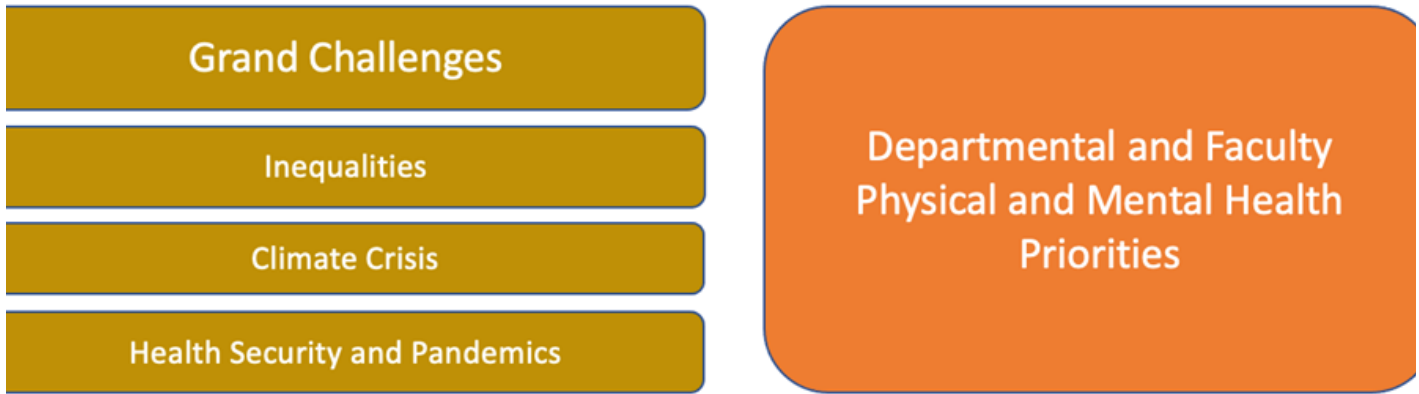
We build with our partnerships: with GOSH Biomedical Research Centre, for instance, in therapies for rare genetic diseases, using cell and genetic approaches and furthering detailed understanding of basic individual disease mechanisms. Together with our partner UCLH Biomedical Research Centre, we train our focus on data science, multimorbidity, women's health, and inequalities.

Taking an interdisciplinary approach within FPHS and working across UCL, our plan is to use our coordination and facilitative body, UCL Health of the Public, and its dedicated staff to engage both internally and with our major NHS and international partners externally in the delivery of our strategy. We have identified five cross-cutting disease areas—cancer, cardiovascular disease, infection, obesity, and mental health—where substantial research exists and we have the potential and opportunity to advance discovery and impact by working across the faculty and with colleagues in other parts of UCL and beyond.

# Ambitions in Research

## Innovation in Methods

*Data Science, Trials, Cohorts, Qualitative Research, Implementations Science*



### Underpinned by 3 cross cutting research approaches:

1. Life-course: pre-conception, pregnancy, children and parents, working age and older adults
2. Health determinants: individual behaviours, social and commercial, political and economic
3. Health systems of the future

**Ambition 4:** As shown in the figure above, UCL as a whole is pursuing a wide-ranging strategy keyed to grand challenges. The Faculty seeks to be at the heart of tackling those challenges, contributing from its perspective and expertise in population health science. That includes:

1. Addressing inequalities underpinning unfair differences in health and life expectancy by establishing an inequalities research collaboration by July 2023, to identify and evaluate effective interventions.
2. Generating evidence to mitigate health impacts of climate change. One way we can support this is by applying for and securing major interdisciplinary research funding through the Wellcome Trust climate change priority area.
3. Establishing FPHS as a global leader in transdisciplinary research needed to address future pandemics and global health security challenges., by establishing a cross-faculty infection network by July 2024.
4. We seek to create a cross-university life course network—the UCL Bentham Initiative—by 2023. We will establish an interdisciplinary centre for research and education, the “UCL Life Course Centre”, by the end of 2027. This will advance our life course understanding of research, curricula and how to address challenges.
5. We aim to influence the social care and learning health systems of the future and also to contribute through the education of our students. One way to support this is by securing new grants across our Institutes. As part of this effort we will establish a Health Economics Policy Laboratory in 2022-23.



# Ambitions in Research

Ambition 5: It is vital to increase research funding in order to ensure successful delivery of our cross-institute priority programmes. To do so, we will support early-career researchers, senior investigators and professional staff to develop competitive proposals and undertake pilot work.

We seek consistency in this effort and aim to ensure continuing access to support all aspects of pre- and post-award activities.

We will:

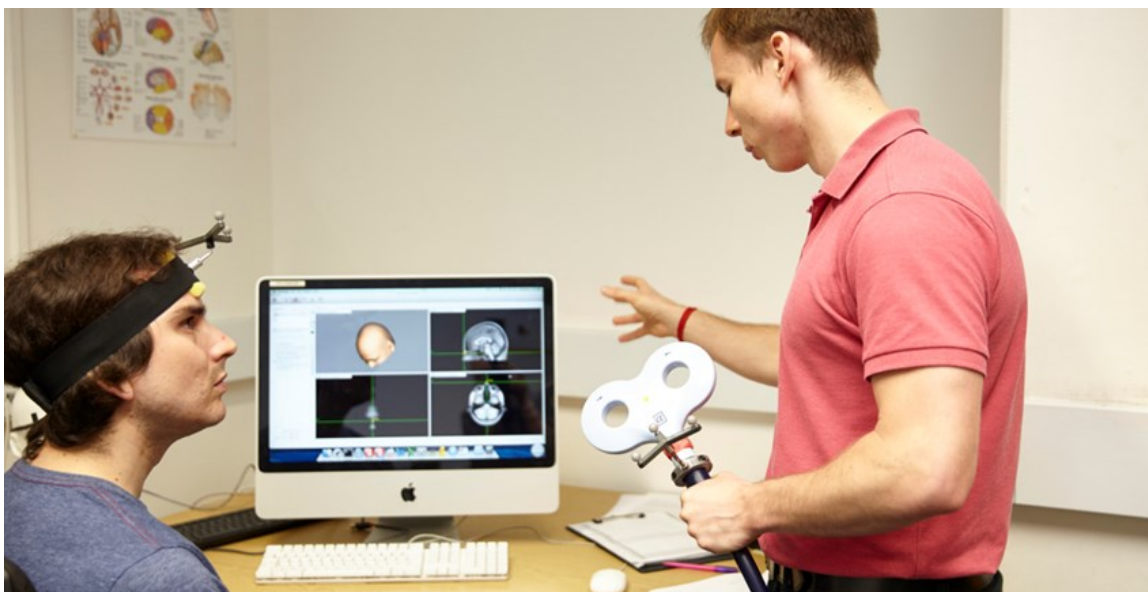
1. Create a faculty level fund for pump-priming opportunities—for example through dedicated support within the Faculty for seed and matching grants—targeted at priority areas and early-career researchers by July 2024.
2. Increase the percentage of funding from competitively awarded research funders from 70% in 2021-22 to 80% by the end of 2023-24, secured predominantly in our identified priority areas. These include cancer, mental health, cardiovascular disease, rare disease, infections and obesity.



# Ambitions in Research

Ambition 6: The Faculty institutes provide wide variety and depth of specific-area expertise. We seek to develop innovation and strengthen the methods that underpin our research through cross-departmental/university collaboration, and with our NHS partners, in the following areas:

1. Investigating population health challenges across the life course by developing and delivering a strategic digital framework for translational health data science. Doing so helps establish UCL as a global top institution in data-driven population health impact. Our unique role in creating data insights should drive connectivity between UCL staff and students, as well as primary, secondary and tertiary organisations.
2. Securing our status as a world leading hub in trials by bringing together our vast clinical trials design and statistical expertise, working across UCL. We will increase the number and scope of UCL trials including preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic and implementation trials in women's health, cardiovascular disease, rare diseases and neurosciences, diversifying the type and intensity of support provided.
3. Our trial capabilities mean that through FPHS groups we can strengthen existing and establish new patient and population cohorts that are world-leading and nationally coordinated. This opens the way for us to lead in integrating multi-omics data to interrogate relationships between phenotypes and genotype, with development of statistical genetics, bioinformatics and computational biology methods.
4. Qualitative data is integral to understanding and working within contemporary public health fields. We will establish a cross-cutting Qualitative Health Research Domain (QRD) by 2023/24 as a step to strengthen qualitative research expertise and impact, and to secure its integration into our interdisciplinary research community.





# Ambitions in Enterprise and Innovation



Research strengths within FPHS make it well-placed to advance innovations and translate these to patient benefits. A key mechanism for achieving impact is through enterprise. FPHS has a sizeable number of national industry contracts and opportunity for further industry links. The Faculty has a strong record of forming spin-out companies, for example in using innovative cell and gene therapies against genetic diseases and cancer. Our well-phenotyped and genotyped cohorts provide means to accelerate translation of discovery science into new experimental treatments. We see further opportunities for innovation in data science, artificial intelligence and machine learning.

**Ambition 7: To work closely with UCL Business and UCL Consultants to convert our discoveries into useful products. This could be via commercialisation of new technologies developed by UCL, through licensing, joint IP development or research partnerships with industry, or by launching spin-out companies.**

## To support this we will:

1. Improve stability of enterprise income. As a measure of doing so, we seek to increase income from the current value of £635,000 in 2021/22 to £1million by the end of 2023/24.
2. Increase the support available to translate discoveries. This will include a faculty-level appointment in 2025.
3. Build on our strengths in gene and cell therapy, immune therapy, rare disease, and diversify to new areas in data science and women's health. To do this we will work with the TRO (Translational Research Office), UCL and our Institutes.
4. Create links to other faculties and partners outside of UCL by using existing short training courses that can be packaged and offered to them, for example with continual professional development. Such options include the QHRN short courses and RREAL courses in rapid qualitative methodology. This also means collaborations with clinical partners (e.g., for CPD training).

# Ambitions in Partnerships



Our vision is centred on partnership for change, collaborating between students, staff and stakeholders and bringing together disciplines to address the grand challenges of the world today.

We interact with a wide range of partners, locally, nationally and internationally: alongside extensive links across UCL, we have connections with partner hospitals (Great Ormond Street Hospital, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, CNWL and Whittington Hospital); NIHR Biomedical Research Centres (GOSH and UCLH); UCL Partners (and its constituent hospitals and Institutions); and NIHR Applied Research Collaboration North Thames. We also value close links with local governments as well as community, faith, equality, charity, voluntary, and other third-sector organisations.

Our engagement spans several large governmental bodies and institutions, including the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, Department of Health and Social Care, Francis Crick Institute, Cancer Research UK, UKRI, NHS England and NHS Improvement, UK Health Security Agency, Africa Health Research Institute, UNICEF and the World Health Organization.

We will utilise UCL Health of the Public as the primary means for engaging cross-university collaborations and partnerships in population health science. Our aims include:

**Ambition 8: Supporting research, education and enterprise, and strengthening local, national and international partnerships is imperative.**

**We will:**

1. Strengthen our work with partner hospitals, primary care and community services, integrated care systems, and local authorities, including through partnership. We will work with our three NIHR Biomedical Research Centres to improve cross hospital and community research in health data science and work with our community and NHS partners to reduce inequalities in access to healthcare.
2. Internationally, we will strengthen partnerships with other world-leading child health academic groupings in Melbourne, Boston and Toronto, and expand our links with partners in low- and middle-income countries.



# Ambitions in People

Reaching our ambitions as a UCL Faculty in research, education and enterprise hinges on rigorous development of our key asset: our people. We see specific ambitions residing in a people plan, which aligns with our goals in education, research and enterprise.

Our approach to people planning is driven by our need to attract and retain the highest talent within FPHS. It is a commitment to ensuring that our workplace culture promotes consistent expectations of the values and behaviours that support our people's desire to develop and succeed, whilst ensuring a healthy work-life balance. We are committed to recognising the vital contribution that staff make to our success, at all levels of seniority, and across all aspects of our work. We will strive to ensure that there is equity across our Faculty and to address those areas where the experience of our staff or our data tells us that this could be improved.

Multidisciplinarity is a key strength of the faculty. We want to further develop it by improving coordination, cohesion and communication between our people across the faculty. We do this in part to enhance external engagement and develop potential for impact. One way we will work to foster

this strength is to create 'hubs' across our faculty estate: dedicated spaces where our teams of staff and students can come together to develop their ideas, connect and learn in ways that support our flexible and innovative approach to developing key activities. We set our ambitions high to do right by our people. They are:

**Ambition 9: To support personal and professional development of our staff. We believe that helping staff achieve helps the Faculty to achieve. Excellence is attained together.**

**We will:**

1. Develop a plan for training and guidance for staff that links workplace behaviours with UCL values by July 2023.
2. Identify the options available to develop our estate so that we maximise opportunities for cross-institute collaborative workspace. A paper setting out our estates development plan will be developed by January 2023.



# Ambitions in People



**Ambition 10: Implementing our action plans to increase diversity and inclusion. We believe this is fundamental to being a vital, vibrant, and learning institution.**

## **We will:**

1. Develop a coordinated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) programme, linked to Athena Swan action planning, across all our departments from 2023/24 onwards.
2. Train a cohort of 10 Fair Recruitment Specialists to support with all stages of the recruitment process cross-faculty by July 2023.
3. Commit to using the Accelerate to Leadership scheme for all grade 8, 9 and 10 Professional Services (PS) posts from 2022-23 onwards.





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