1.1 Guiding Principles

Student recruitment represents the first stage in the UCL student journey. The experience at this stage will set students’ perceptions of UCL and will have a significant impact on their decision to apply to, and ultimately accept an offer of admission to UCL.

1.1.1 UCL aligns its student recruitment processes to Key Enabler 6 in its strategic plan, UCL-2034, via its central recruitment team working in the Communication and Marketing (CAM) Division. The activities set out in this chapter are focused on delivering successful outcomes following the programme development activity set out in Chapter 3, Programme and Module Approval Framework.

1.1.2 Activity within the CAM Student Recruitment Marketing department (SRM), encompasses: international and UK recruitment, affiliate and summer school recruitment, prospective student recruitment communications, plus digital marketing and market research to support recruitment in all segments.

1.1.3 A consolidated central team allows the institution to adopt a consistent approach to recruitment and ensures alignment with agreed strategic priorities. The central team liaises and works closely with the academic Faculties and Departments to ensure a coordinated approach throughout the institution.

1.1.4 The Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) takes the academic lead for recruitment and champions the strategic priorities to academic colleagues and other members of UCL’s Senior Management Team.
1.1.5 UCL has a standing committee, the Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee (StRAFC) which is chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs). This Committee has institutional oversight of recruitment strategy and policy, reviewing these against the University’s mission and strategic objectives. StRAFC membership encompasses senior colleagues from all of UCL’s academic Schools, relevant Professional Service Divisions and from and UCLU, ensuring appropriate representation from across UCL, facilitating strategic level discussion and allowing constructive dialogue to take place.

1.1.6 The Director of Student Recruitment Marketing is UCL’s lead officer for student recruitment policy and practice. The Director is responsible for developing and implementing student recruitment strategies for all affiliate, international, undergraduate and graduate recruitment. These strategies and policies align with UCL’s wider strategic policies and priorities.

1.1.7 Staff involved in student recruitment advise prospective students in line with the UCL’s student recruitment and admissions policies. They are trained and informed of their responsibilities with regard to the need for accuracy and consistency of information when communicating with enquirers in order to comply with CMA good practice guidelines (see www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/resources/cma-advice).

1.1.8 Student recruitment is undertaken with reference to UCL’s Equal Opportunities Policy and to the QAA Quality Code for higher education, in particular Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education. The recruitment of international students is also undertaken with reference to the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) Code of Practice.

1.1.9 UCL has a policy of not recruiting students to degree or degree level programmes through commercial, commission based relationships with agents. UCL’s due diligence in relation to the Bribery Act was predicated on this position. An exception is made for the UCL Centre for Languages and International Education, which does use agents in a limited number of markets for pre-degree (preparatory and English language) programmes.

1.2 Market Research

1.2.1 UCL’s core student recruitment activity is informed by market research and data analysis processes, designed to interpret UCL and external data to provide insight at both a institutional level and a departmental level. Market research further supports recruitment publication design, develops insight into new and existing markets across faculties and provides information and advice for best practice for independent market research.

1.2.2 UCL annually analyses relevant data to identify trends for students studying in the UK, understand UCL’s performance against the sector, the Russell Group, and other identified groups. Regular insights into student recruitment performance is disseminated, along with top-level market insights, across UCL in the form of infographics, scorecards and by other methods.

1.2.3 The Market Research team further provides data and insight at a greater level of detail for external use by SRM in planning and executing recruitment and marketing activity.

1.2.4 Faculties and Departments are able to request research reports on the likely market research for proposed new programmes. The research uses in-depth UK-wide data and complementary international education data to produce an overview of any existing
competition, market trends and also identifies, where possible, key countries or regions for recruitment to such programmes.

1.2.5 Often quantitative analysis requires accompanying qualitative or additional, bespoke quantitative research, especially when programmes are completely new and/or unique to the market. In instances such as these, advice and support can be provided on how best to approach qualitative market research, and external companies can be recommended where appropriate.

1.2.6 The Data and Market Research Team works closely with the Planning Team in order to provide data and analysis to input into the recruitment target setting process and other projects as required.

1.2.7 Policies and procedures related to student recruitment market research are laid out in 1. Market Research Policies and Procedures.

1.3 Student Recruitment Communications

1.3.1 UCL’s core student recruitment communications are produced by the Student Recruitment Marketing department, part of the UCL Communications and Marketing Division. A range of student recruitment communications are published in print and digital media to inform prospective students about the details of its degree and affiliate student programmes.

1.3.2 All student recruitment communications should follow the good practice guidelines set out in 2. Good practice in Student Recruitment Communications.

1.3.3 UCL produces annual versions of the following key student recruitment publications in print and online.

1 Undergraduate Prospectus

This is published in early March each year and is targeted at students intending to begin undergraduate degree studies at UCL in September of the following year, eighteen months after the date of publication.

The printed edition of the prospectus provides an overview of UCL’s undergraduate offering. More detailed information is hosted in the online edition. PDF downloads of the online content for each programme are available for download and for printing as marketing collateral.

Details of the production process and timelines are set out in 3. Undergraduate Prospectus and associated materials policies and procedures.

2 Graduate Prospectus

This is published in early September each year and is targeted towards students intending to begin graduate taught studies one year after the date of publication or research studies at any time, although entry is usually in September of each year.

The printed edition of the prospectus provides an overview of UCL’s graduate study offering. More detailed information is hosted in the online edition. PDF downloads of the
online content for each taught programme are available for download and for printing as marketing collateral.

Details of the production process and timelines are set out in 4. Graduate Prospectus and associated materials policies and procedures.

3 Study Abroad and Summer School literature

The printed edition of ‘Study Abroad at UCL’ provides an overview of UCL’s study abroad offering. More detailed information is hosted in the online edition. This information is published early in September of each year and is targeted towards students intending to begin affiliate studies in either the September twelve months after the date of publication or January sixteen months after the date of publication.

The printed UCL Summer School leaflet provides a brief overview of UCL’s Summer School offering and is published in August/September of each year. It is targeted at students intending to enter UCL in July/August 11/12 months after the date of publication. Full details of the Summer School are made available online in September of each year and these are targeted at students intending to begin their Summer School programme in July/August, ten or eleven months after the date of publication.

Details of the production process and timelines for ‘Study Abroad at UCL’ and UCL Summer School materials are set out in 5. Study Abroad at UCL and Summer School publications.

All prospectuses are intended to provide information to prospective students to inform the early stages of their decision making process about whether to make an application to UCL. Online editions include text, imagery and video content.

More detailed information, designed to provide enquirers with information about such issues as the study experience, departmental facilities and teaching staff, is provided by academic departments and faculties.

1.3.4 Web sites

The prospectus websites detailed in 1.3.3 above are intended to provide information to address first and second level enquiries from prospective students. Production and communication of detailed information about degree programmes (e.g. staff details, departmental facilities, detailed module content etc.) are the responsibility of academic departments.

Guidance on what should be included, editorial standards and how it should be linked to prospectus content in order to benefit users’ journeys through the UCL website are available at 6. Good practice for student recruitment content on departmental websites.

1.3.5 Video content

Communications and Marketing is responsible for producing video content to support UCL’s Widening Participation activities. Advice and guidance for department and faculty staff wishing to produce video content to support student recruitment is available on the CAM website at: www.ucl.ac.uk/cam
It is important that quality control standards are applied and all video content complies with the advice and guidance prepared by the Competition and Markets Authority with regard to provision of information to prospective students.

Details of the editorial guidelines to be followed for all student recruitment-focused videos are available at 7. Good practice in the Production of Student Recruitment Video Content.

1.3.6 Social Media

Where student recruitment is concerned, SRM maintains its own social media accounts for the following purposes:

- Raising awareness of the UCL brand, the UCL offering, and student recruitment activities
- Driving traffic to the UCL website
- Advertising

Social media accounts are also used to respond to queries from prospective students.

Further information is available in Student Recruitment Good Practice at 8. Student Recruitment Good Practice.

1.4 Student Recruitment Operations

1.4.1 Via a comprehensive programme of student recruitment activities in the UK, overseas, and online, UCL seeks to ensure that all prospective students have access to information to help their decision-making. See Student Recruitment Good Practice at 8. Student Recruitment Good Practice.

1.4.2 In the UK Student Recruitment Marketing (SRM) organises three UCL-wide undergraduate open days, a graduate open day, attendance at recruitment fairs, information sessions on how to apply, and visits to schools. These are complemented by Access and Admissions activities such as delivering workshops, taster lectures and masterclasses and running a large number of projects and sessions specifically aimed at widening participation students including residential and non-residential summer schools (see Annex 1.1.5 - Widening Participation Guidelines for Good Practice). A ‘Representing UCL’ booklet is produced by SRM for use by UCL staff when participating in student recruitment activity.

1.4.3 In overseas markets SRM interacts with and builds relationships with prospective students, their parents, advisers, and sponsors through a range of activities including school and university visits, visits to ministries and funding bodies, public presentations and information sessions, counselling sessions, and attendance at education exhibitions, study abroad fairs and sectorial conferences. All of these activities – which contribute to ensuring that applicants make informed decisions when applying for admission to UCL - are undertaken by trained staff and student ambassadors. SRM produces a booklet providing advice and guidance for staff entitled “Representing UCL”.

These activities are supported by the printed prospectuses and the Prospective Students website which provide extensive information on studying at UCL and the programmes offered.
1.4.4 Student recruitment activities are reinforced by the collection of enquirer data to facilitate an enhanced prospective experience via the delivery of tailored information.

1.4.5 UCL uses a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to manage prospective student data, and to send student recruitment marketing communications, from enquiry to acceptance of an offer. The CRM is managed centrally by Student Recruitment Marketing in order to ensure consistent and coordinated recruitment communications and full coverage across all faculties. The CRM system acts as a central repository for all prospective student data collected via the UCL prospective students’ web pages, and collected by the SRM team as a result of recruitment activities.

Policies and procedures related to the CRM are set out in 9. Student recruitment communications and the CRM policy and procedure.

1.4.6 For the purpose of recruitment to UCL programmes, it is recognised that partnerships with other universities and organisations can play an important role. A strong network of exchange and study abroad partnerships can provide students with the sort of short-term study abroad experience that often leads to applications to full degree programmes.

1.4.7 For non-award bearing (but potentially credit bearing) term time and summer school affiliate study, UCL works with a number of study abroad organisations. UCL does not work with study abroad organisations on a for commission basis.

1.4.8 Partnerships with funding bodies are an integral part of UCL’s student recruitment policy. Funding bodies can take a variety of forms, from private institutions to NGOs, to government ministries. SRM takes the institutional lead in negotiating new and renewed agreements with funding bodies. Most of these are fee partnership scholarship agreements whereby the funding body and UCL will contribute (to varying degrees) to the tuition fees and the maintenance costs of the students. Following approval by the Head of Student Funding, and referral to Legal Services, the agreements are approved by the Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee (StRAFC) and signed-off by the Chair. Academic Schools are on represented on StRAFC at Dean and Faculty Tutor. Once approved by StRAFC, there is no mechanism for faculties to opt out of the shared scholarship agreements.

1.4.9 All staff working centrally in student recruitment are required to read and comply with UCL’s anti-corruption and bribery policy (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/finance/policies-procedures/bribery). Staff are required to familiarise themselves with the Bribery Act 2010 and its relevance to student recruitment.

1.5 Quality control

1.5.1 In line with the guiding principles surrounding UCL’s student recruitment activities, and to maintain compliance with CMA advice with regard to provision of content for use in student recruitment-focused marketing materials, all student recruitment communications, across all channels, must be produced in accordance with the guidelines for quality control as set out in Section 1.1.7 of this document.

1.5.2 Student Recruitment Marketing is responsible for ensuring that high standards in student recruitment are maintained and that UCL’s recruitment policies are adhered to. In
instances of uncertainty and/or where clarification of policy is required, these should be referred to the Director of Student Recruitment Marketing.