STUDENTS' UNION UCL

Student Priorities for

Wellbeing Report 2019

Where **more** happens

Contents

Introduction

The importance of student wellbeing is now well understood within the Higher Education landscape, not only as it relates to student satisfaction but also through its link to educational attainment. The need to prioritise this vital area of the student experience has also been reflected within government in recent years, with former Universities Minister Sam Gyimah describing student wellbeing as "one of the immediate challenges we face as a sector and as a country" in a letter to university Vice Chancellors in 2018.

UCL itself has gone to great length to prioritise student wellbeing in recent years, including the implementation of a Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy from 2019-21. It is from this strategy where this report takes its definition of student wellbeing, an important clarification at this stage given that this term can be deployed in a variety of different contexts, and is often used interchangeably with other terms such as mental health. Student wellbeing is defined as:

"A state of physical, mental and emotional health where a student is able to engage meaningfully in learning and contribute to their community. Wellbeing is personal and multifactorial, but typically includes feelings of being socially connected, a sense of direction and belonging, satisfaction with personal achievements, and low levels of anxiety."

This report aims to build on and contribute to the work that UCL is already doing on this issue in the spirit of partnership laid out in the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which promotes a "whole-university approach to student health and wellbeing" that requires various parties including the Students' Union to "share responsibility, get involved and contribute to the process".

The report looks to achieve this by reviewing students' feedback in relation to their wellbeing across core student surveys conducted in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The results from the surveys have been mapped to various elements of student wellbeing, in order to provide a joined-up picture of student feedback on this issue.

Using this evidence base, as well as incorporating outside sources, the report will highlight some of the issues students face during their time at UCL, identifying areas of good practice and recommendations for improvement in relation to student wellbeing within both UCL and the Students' Union. The data and feedback will be presented in three areas:

- Mental Wellbeing (Mental Health, Disability, Finance, Careers and Opportunity, Communication and Guidance)
- Social Wellbeing (Welcome Period, Community and Belonging, Housing)
- Physical (Physical Activity, Sleep)

Ultimately, wellbeing is fundamental to student success, with clear evidence that it is a determinative factor in areas of retention and attainment. The better we are able to collate and understand what students are saying about this issue, the more targeted and impactful the work that UCL and Students' Union UCL in this area becomes, and it is hoped that this report will help increase this understanding within both organisations.

Section 1: Mental Wellbeing

a) Mental Health

The importance of mental health within our society cannot be understated. According to Mind, approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK experience a mental health problem each year, and 1 in 6 people in England report experiencing a common mental health problem such as anxiety and depression in any given week.

Given the scale of this challenge, it is therefore unsurprising that mental health and wellbeing has become an area of Higher Education provision with significant issues over recent years. This challenge stems from a combination of increased levels of poor mental health reported each year and a greater pressure on support services to provide a high-quality service to a growing student population, sometimes with no increase in resource.

The student experience is often wrought with financial, academic and social pressures, and increasing levels of anxiety and depression, coupled with the continued presence of a stigma placed on students who are struggling, means mental health has an obvious effect on student wellbeing.

In 2017, Students' Union UCL released Heads Up: Reporting on Mental Health, a report on UCL students' experiences based on research conducted by the Union. This study led to four recommendations for improving the support available for students:

- To create a single point of entry to UCL support services
- To run a campaign to tackle mental health stigma
- To improve the recruitment and training of departmental pastoral support
- To increase funding to Student Psychological and Counselling Services by £340,000.

UCL has made huge strides in improving mental health support for students, with all four recommendations having been adopted. However, there are new challenges UCL must face in dealing with issues surrounding student mental health.

The first of these challenges centres on mental health provision for Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students. According to the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), student satisfaction with the mental health drop-in service provided by Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) was only 52% in 2019, which is a 4% drop from the previous year, suggesting more needs to be done to make these services work for all UCL students.

A further obstacle presents itself in the number of students disclosing their mental health condition to the university. In the 2018/19 New to UCL survey, 11% of students reported having a mental health condition, up from 8% in 2017 and significantly more than the number of students who declared a learning disability (3%), or a long-term health condition/ a physical disability (3%).

This is in stark contrast to national figures, which report that around 25% of the population have mental health difficulties each year, suggesting that there may be an issue with underreporting within the available data. There may be many factors contributing to this, but one partial explanation for this deficit may be that UCL survey questions often ask only for references to medically diagnosed conditions as opposed to experiences of poor mental health to varying degrees.

In addition, less than half of New to UCL respondents (48%) reported that they had declared their disability and/or mental health condition to the Student Support and Wellbeing Service, although this figure has increased from 46% in 2017 and is only slightly behind national figures from a 2019 Unite Students' survey, in which 53% of respondents said they had disclosed their mental health condition to the university. The issue of coming forward may be more prevalent within some demographic groups of students than others. For example, in the academic year 2018-19 approximately 41% of the student population was male, however only 29% of the students who registered for one-to-one support with Student Psychological Services (SPS) during the same period were male.

Qualitative data from the WonkHe Students' Union impact survey also supports the idea that most students look outside the university sphere when looking for support. Only 14% of respondents mentioned anyone within their university life (Coursemates, Personal Tutor, University Support Services, SU Services etc.) when asked the question "if you needed help, who would you call on?".

This suggests that across the board more needs to be done to create a supportive environment for students to declare their mental health condition and seek help across the whole of UCL, which will not only help to improve provision in this area but also help us understand the scale of the issue. This includes adopting some of the suggested actions in the Student Health and Wellbeing strategy, such as to "involve expertise from across the UCL academic community, in particular within the Faculty of Brain Sciences, to inform and shape UCL's approach to supporting and improving the mental health and wellbeing of students".

This issue is especially important as the attitudes towards mental health amongst new students may be changing. New to UCL data also shows that of the 11% with a diagnosed mental health condition, 95% already had their condition before attending UCL, and the Unite Students' survey shows that nationally more students than ever are accepting of mental health as 'part of who I am' (47%) and 'a normal part of life' (36%)'. In order to adapt to these potentially shifting student attitudes, more specific data is therefore needed on the general mental health situation at UCL.

Data:

- Only 11% of students reported having a mental health condition (e.g. depression, anxiety disorder). (New to UCL)
- Postgraduate Taught student satisfaction with the mental health drop-in service provided by Student Support and Wellbeing dropped 4% from 2018 to 2019, from 56% to 52% (PTES).

UCL	Students' Union
U1: Reword student survey questions around mental health within the New to UCL and Student Experience Surveys to be more inclusive of undiagnosed conditions, using language such as 'mental health difficulties' or 'poor mental wellbeing'.	S1: Introduce Mental Health First Aid Training for our Welfare Officers across our 300 Clubs & Societies.
U2: Create a guide Transition Support Plan for students entering UCL with pre-existing mental health conditions.	S2: Improve awareness of the Heads Up Fund, which ensures that students get quicker access to psychological and counselling support when they need it.
U3: Ensure the implementation of the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy objective 1F ("Facilitate exchanges of expertise, research and experiences with regard to student health and wellbeing").	

b) Disability

Whilst UCL is extremely diverse in its student makeup, one group of students who may be underrepresented are disabled students, or at least those students who declare a disability. According to UCL student statistics available for 2018-19, approximately 8% of students declare a disability at UCL, compared to the national rate of 13% from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

UCL figures on the support disabled students receive paint a mixed picture, concerning both overall satisfaction and whether support has improved in recent years. The number of students in the Student Experience Survey (SES) who felt they were receiving the support they require to help them manage the impact of their disability saw a significant increase from 43% to 65% between 2017 and 2018.

However, figures for a similar question in the PTES dropped during this period from 69% to 64%. Whilst it is difficult to gauge the exact satisfaction levels for disabled students, it is undoubtedly true that these figures should be comfortably higher than they currently are.

Feedback was more positive when focussed specifically on the Disability Service. In the 2018/19 SES, 77% of service users agreed that 'Overall, I received the help I needed from Disability Services', figures that suggest that the service is relatively popular amongst those who use it.

However, there may still be an issue with engagement with the service; according to the 2019 Student Support Survey (SSS), whilst 70% of respondents were aware of the SSW only 44% were aware of drop-in sessions and only 21% were aware of reasonable adjustments for disabled students. This is supported by figures in the 2018 New to UCL survey, which suggest that awareness of the Disability Support Services was only at 71% amongst new students, with this figure at 63% for new undergraduates.

Improved communication regarding not only the service but also its potential benefits to disabled students would certainly improve this engagement and awareness. Fulfilling the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy objective to "offer dedicated information to student groups who may require additional support to settle into UCL" includes students with disabilities as the strategy suggests it will be crucial in ensuring that this improved communication happens.

In addition to official UCL surveys and data, it is also worth considering a report published in January 2020 by the Disabled Students' Network (DSN), an autonomous collective of disabled students at UCL, including the 2019-20 SU Officer for Disabled Students, Zohar Mendzelevski-Steinberg.

The report, entitled "Disability Discrimination Faced by UCL Students and Recommended Measures", includes testimony from various disabled students at UCL on the difficulties they have faced in their student experience, including recommendations for how these problems can be addressed. It provides a troubling account of issues disabled students at UCL face that is not picked up by any of the UCL surveys, and the DSN merit full and immediate engagement from UCL on this piece of work.

There are also areas where the Students' Union may have to look at its activity, such as in the programme offered during Welcome Week. Whilst UCL data is not available, there is significant national evidence that disabled students have a less positive experience of Welcome Week than other groups of students.

According to data from the 2019 Unite Students Report, the average score given by disabled students to their experience during Fresher's Week was 6.1/10, the joint-lowest of any group surveyed. Moving forward, collecting this data, and adapting the Welcome Week experience in response, will be imperative in ensuring disabled students get the most out of their interactions with the Students' Union.

Data:

- 8% of UCL students have declared a disability vs 13% of the general UK population (UCL Student Statistics, HESA).
- 77% of service users agreed that 'Overall, I received the help I needed' from Disability Services' (SES).

UCL	Students' Union
U4: Improve the dedicated information offered to disabled students at UCL throughout their journey, from pre-arrival to graduation.	S3: Collect data and work with the Disabled Students' Network to ensure that disabled students have a positive experience of Welcome Week activities.
U5: Engage with the Disabled Students' Network on their report and recommendations on disabled students' experience at UCL.	

c) Finance

Having financial concerns as a student is another area with a clear link to mental wellbeing. According to the National Student Money Survey 2019, 79% of students worry about making ends meet, and 57% say that their mental health suffers as a result of issues with finance. There is also some academic evidence to support this link, such as a review of the connection between financial stress and mental health conducted by UCL's own Tayla McCloud (Division of Psychiatry) and David Bann (Centre for Longitudinal Studies), which in 2019 concluded that "financial stress, as indicated by students' financial concern", may be associated with mental health outcomes.

In addition, evidence suggests that this is an issue specifically for UCL students; in the 2019 SSS survey respondents were asked which of a series of issues they struggled with. When responses were divided by fee status and level of study, over 40% struggled with 'Managing money' in 7 of the 9 groups, with UK Undergraduates (56%) and EU/ EEA Postgraduates (57%) scoring highest.

Financial worries may also become an issue for UCL moving forward in attracting the best and brightest students. In the 2018 New to UCL survey, when asked the question 'What, if anything, might have stopped you from studying your chosen degree programme here?', 3 of the 4 most popular answers related to finance. What is more, all of these categories saw an increase in the number of students who selected this option from 2017; the 'Cost of living in London' score rose from 44% to 48%, 'Tuition fees' from 34% to 37% and 'Scholarships available' from 17% to 18%.

More needs to be done by UCL to address these concerns in a meaningful way. Whilst issues such as the cost of living in London and tuition fees are not directly in UCL's control, recent developments such as the Augar Review and the government's response present opportunities for both UCL and the Students' Union to lobby on this issue nationally.

One of the areas where financial worries manifest themselves most clearly is in the area of time management, and the need for students to undertake paid work during term-time to finance their studies. According to data from the WonkHe SU Impact survey conducted in 2019, half of UCL respondents undertake paid work during term-time and around 1 in 8 students work more than 15 hours per week.

Although students derive immense non-financial benefit and learning from working alongside their studies, and UCL figures are slightly lower than the national average, it is concerning that so many students are in a financial position where they are required to work this number of hours.

This may be an area where the Students' Union can play a role, especially considering that in the SU Impact Survey UCL respondents were less likely to have worked for the SU than average (4% vs 5%). Given the flexible nature of the work offered, and the fact that student-staff receive the London Living Wage, supporting students financially through meaningful paid work presents an area where the Students' Union can look to increase its provision.

UCL provides guidance on student fees, funding, financial support, bursaries and money management, however questions remain as to whether the financial support itself is sufficient. In addition to the aforementioned figures regarding available scholarships in the New to UCL survey, figures from the 2018 PTES indicate that only 9% of students are studying at UCL because 'funding was available to study this particular course', the 10th most popular response of 14. It is perhaps more concerning that this is a slight drop from 2017, when this figure was 10%, and it is clear that more needs to be done to improve the financial support provided by the university.

Data:

- One of the biggest factors that might have stopped students from studying their chosen degree programme at UCL was tuition fees at 37% (New to UCL).
- 3 of the 4 most popular answers to the question 'What, if anything, might have stopped you from studying your chosen degree programme here?' related to finance (New to UCL).

Recommendations:

UCL	Students' Union
U6: Increase scholarship and bursary funds available.	S4: Implement the objective set out in the 2017-21 strategic plan to "develop ways of better inducting, training, communicating with, and recognising the hard work of our great student staff team".
B1: Look into a communication and research campaign related to full-time students who work over 15 hours per week.	
B2: Look into areas where further student job opportunities can be increased.	

d) Employability

The issue of employability is high on the agenda of most current and prospective students across the country, and UCL is no different. In the 2019 SU impact survey, students were asked 'what concerns you most on a day to day basis at university?', and UCL respondents ranked 2 career-related issues in the top 5, with 46% of students selecting 'gaining the right skills/ experience for my career' and 41% of students selecting 'finding a job after graduation'. Both these figures were comfortably above the national average.

This was also reflected in the feedback the Students' Union received during their strategy consultation. Students prioritised a need to develop employability skills through their extra-curricular activities as well as their course. A big driver for students in choosing where to study is the career opportunities that university will open for them, and by many metrics UCL scores well in this area.

UCL is ranked among the top 20 universities in the world for the employability of its graduates (QS Employability Rankings) based on five indicators; Employer Reputation, Alumni Outcomes, Partnerships with Employers, Employer - Student Connections and Graduate Employment Rate.

Internal student experience data also provides some positive indicators for UCL. In the 2018 PTES for example, 73% of students agreed that as a result of their course they 'feel better prepared for my future career', with the same number suggesting that they 'have been encouraged to think about what skills I need to develop for my career'.

However, there are certainly less positive results to be found in some other data sources. In the 2018 SES only 42% of students agreed that 'the career development on my academic course has lived up to my expectations so far', and the number of students who indicated that 'the Careers events I have attended or services I have used were useful' dropped 8% from the same figures in 2017 (63% to 55%). It may be that there is more work to be done in order to intertwine work done centrally by UCL Careers with activity amongst academic departments, especially with regards to careers events themselves.

Finally, it may be worth considering that the student profile with regards to attitudes to careers and employability may be changing across the UK. According to the 2019 Unite Students' Insight Report, which surveyed a mixture of university applicants and first-year students, attitudes to employability were changing. The report suggests that the issue is "framed in terms of their future financial stability and quality of life rather than traditional definitions of achievement. Their aspirations are fairly modest, and appear to centre around 'living comfortably' rather than 'being wealthy'.

This shifting narrative ties into a general sense of pessimism amongst many students about their place in the world. In the same survey, 78% of respondents believe that it will be harder for them to find a job than it was for their parents.

However, there is some evidence that UCL bucks the trend in this regard. In results from a national survey conducted by employer branding specialist Universum in 2019 which included over 1,000 UCL respondents, UCL students were far less likely to prioritise being "stable or secure in my job" as a career goal, with only 34% of UCL students selecting this option, compared with 51% nationally.

Instead, UCL students disproportionately prioritised being "competitively or intellectually challenged (49% vs 38% nationally) and having an "international career" (37% vs 29% nationally). This is an area that would benefit from monitoring and research over the next few years by the Students' Union in order to see whether UCL continues to differ from the national trend towards stability, especially as any change in student attitudes may affect service delivery.

Data:

- 42% of undergraduate students felt satisfied that 'the career development on my academic course has lived up to my expectations so far' (SES).
- 55% of undergraduate students agreed 'Careers events I have attended or services I have used were useful' (SES).
- 78% of UK respondents believe that it will be harder for them to find a job than it was for their parents (Unite Students Insight Report).

Recommendations:

UCL	Students' Union
U7: UCL Careers to work more closely with academic departments, improving department specific careers events and guidance.	
B3: Monitor the career motivations of UCL students and implement any necessary changes in service delivery and student-facing activity.	

d) Communication and Guidance

Receiving effective communication and guidance is an essential factor in maintaining student wellbeing, both at course level and across the institution. Some of the UCL data on this issue is encouraging, especially at the beginning of the student journey; a significant number of postgraduate students surveyed in the 2018 PTES indicated that the information provided by UCL to help choose their course was 'easy to find' (87%) and 'useful' (85%). In addition, the 2018 New to UCL survey found that 93% of students felt that the information provided about their programme or research pathway before they arrived was 'accurate'.

However, the picture quickly becomes more negative as students begin their course. In the 2019 National Student Survey (NSS), only 69% of students agreed that they 'had received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course', and whilst this figure was an increase on the 67% received for this question in 2018, it still fell 9% lower than the sector average, the 5th biggest UCL deficit of the 27 questions.

A similar issue was apparent in the question of whether "good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course", with 65% of UCL respondents agreeing compared to 75% nationally, the 3rd biggest UCL deficit. The data suggests that the issue is slightly less prevalent for PGT students, with 73% of 2018 PTES respondents agreeing that they were 'given appropriate guidance and support when I started my course', however this number is also down on the 2017 figure of 74%.

The imperative to improve communication channels is not limited to course-based issues, and students feel the positive effects if they are fully aware of the various support services available to them as well as the processes they need to go through to access them. Effective communication in both these areas not only helps students in their ability to access said services and complete these processes, but also gives them the knowledge that there is a support system they can use to assist them in navigating university life.

In many areas these support services and processes for UCL are well-regarded, such as those in place to help international students through the hurdles they face when they begin their studies in the UK. In the 2018 New to UCL survey over 85% of non-UK students surveyed reported that the information they received about how the visa process works on the International Student Support website (89%), how to open a bank account (87%) and accessing healthcare (88%) was useful.

However, one area for potential improvement that has been raised in the past concerns the communication and guidance provided by personal tutors on areas of mental health. According to the SU Heads Up report, focus group participants cited a "perceived lack of mental health knowledge", and these participants also highlighted "personal tutors' lack of knowledge of services available within UCL and the signposting procedures".

On the general issue of signposting, it is worth noting that there is very little information gathered on students' experience of this post-arrival and throughout their time at UCL. The WonkHe SU Impact survey included open-text questions on what more could be done by both the university and the Students' Union to support students who are feeling lonely and struggling with mental health issues, and many UCL students brought up the idea of improved communication as to the services available.

The qualitative feedback received in this survey included comments such as "make the services available more well-known" and "there are resources available, I think it's just making those students more aware of how to access them". This is borne out in the national narrative on specific areas of student support, such as student mental health. According to the Unite Students' Insight Report 2019, "among students in the survey who had used a (mental health) service, the quality is generally found to be high", implying that increasing awareness of the services on offer, rather than improving the quality of the services themselves, may be a sensible priority.

Data:

- 87% of Postgraduates felt the information provided by UCL to help choose their course was 'easy to find' (PTES).
- 65% of UCL students agreed with the statement "good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course" (NSS).

Recommendations:

UCL	Students' Union
U8: Collect feedback on students' experiences of signposting throughout their time at UCL.	S5: Improve the process of utilising the network of student representatives (including welfare officers in Club & Societies and Academic Reps) to cascade information and guidance to students.
U9: Concentrate on equipping staff so they feel confident in giving support to students at first contact, and then signposting if necessary.	S6: Review the online information provided regarding support services, making sure it is up to date, accessible and consistent with UCL's online information.

Section 2: Social Wellbeing

a) Welcome Period

Welcome period is a critical time in any student journey. Not only does this period introduce incoming students to life at their new institution both inside and outside the classroom, it gives these students a chance to become part of a wider community and build networks integral for their social wellbeing.

The headline figures for how welcomed students feel at UCL are extremely encouraging. In the New to UCL survey in 2018 96% of new students agreed that staff in their department had made them feel welcome, and 88% of respondents agreed that they feel welcome as both part of the wider UCL community and as part of the community in their department or research unit. Strikingly, whilst for the latter two questions numbers are high across all levels of study, the figures were lowest amongst undergraduate students.

However, satisfaction levels were slightly lower in other areas of the Welcome period. In the same New to UCL survey, 75% of respondents found the 2018 Welcome Fair useful, with a significant decrease in satisfaction depending on level of study; 79% for UG students, 73% for PGT and 66% for Postgraduate Research (PGR).

Changes have been made by the SU to make the fair more appealing to PGT and PGR students in 2019, including allocating 2 postgraduate-only hours from 4-6pm on Saturday and working with the Disabled Students' Network to make the fair more accessible. The results of the 2019 New to UCL survey should be monitored to see whether this has made any difference to the overall figures, and it is important to consider that further steps may need to be taken in future to make the Welcome Fair as accessible as possible.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there also exists a gap in level of study between UG, PGT and PGR students on the question of whether new students "found the social events in the first week helped me to settle in". Amongst undergraduate students this number was 80%, however it dropped to 77% for PGT students and further to 72% for PGR students. This deficit may be difficult to close completely because of different expectations and priorities for the Welcome period amongst students at different levels of study, however there is clearly work to be done to tailor the PGR student experience during this time.

The importance of using the Welcome period for effective social events, particularly for the Students' Union, can also be found in other sources. When UCL respondents to the WonkHe belonging survey were asked an open-text question about what prevented them from getting more involved in SU activities, 2 of the 3 most common answers concerned general time commitments (23% of respondents) and academic commitments (17% of respondents).

Given that academic commitments are at their lowest during this point in the academic year, and that most students' time commitments are already focussed on settling in and induction, taking advantage of the Welcome period for social and community-building events is therefore crucial in ensuring students' social wellbeing is taken care of.

A commitment has been made in the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy to "Identify best practice and strengthen the co-ordination of UCL and the Students' Union's many induction activities, ensuring that all students receive a welcoming start to their life at UCL", and implementing this will help improve the effectiveness of events during this period.

Social events was also the most common type of answer given to the open-text question of 'what the university/ Students' Union could do to support students who are struggling with mental health issues', with 23% of respondents putting this idea forward. It is clear that effective social events are therefore not just important to the idea of social wellbeing but also to a student's mental wellbeing, and the Welcome period provides the perfect window to offer students these opportunities.

Data:

- 96% of students felt the 'Staff in the department or programme have made me feel welcome' (New to UCL).
- 88% of students agreed that 'they feel welcome as part of the wider UCL community' (New to UCL).
- There was a difference of 8% between the number of UG and PGR students who agreed that they 'found the social events in the first week helped me to settle in'- 80% vs 72% (New to UCL).

Recommendations:

UCL	Students' Union
	S7: Introduce mechanisms to monitor PGT and PGR satisfaction at the 2020 Welcome Fair and make changes if necessary.
B4: Increase the provision of postgraduate specific social events during the Welcome Period, especially those targeted at PGR students.	
B5: Ensure the implementation of the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy objective 2D ("Identify best practice and strengthen the co-ordination of UCL and the Students' Union's many induction activities, ensuring that all students receive a welcoming start to their life at UCL").	

b) Community and Belonging

Social wellbeing is an area that extends beyond the Welcome period, and one of the crucial ingredients to maximising social wellbeing is making sure that students feel part of a wider community. In the Student Priorities for Education Report in 2019 the SU laid out some positive feedback regarding a sense of belonging as it relates to the student experience, suggesting that "attempts should be made to foster (a sense of belonging) on the programme, department, and faculty level".

The proposal for the creation of a UCL Belonging Project in November 2019 defined belonging as "the attachment to a particular social group which allows us to thrive in our social environment". This is an area where many of the underlying statistics are not favourable to UCL. For example, only 62% of respondents to the 2019 NSS agreed that they "feel part of a community of staff and students", the 4th lowest UCL score across all 27 questions and an area that also saw the 4th smallest improvement (0.6%) from 2018.

Results in this area were also not encouraging in the Student Experience Survey, with only 61% of students responding positively to the same question in this survey in 2019, although this represents a 9% improvement from the same survey two years previously.

The available data remains a cause for concern when looking at this issue using more specific language, such as discussing the issue through terms such as 'belonging' and 'fitting in'. Belonging is a key component in a wide range of areas related to student wellbeing and attainment. For example, there is evidence that feeling isolated and excluded is a key factor in areas such as the BME attainment gap, according to the 2019 NUS report on BME student attainment.

Evidence suggests that 'belonging' and 'fitting in' is another area where UCL falls behind other HE providers. According to the SU impact survey, UCL students feel less of a sense of belonging at their university than the national average (61% vs 69%), as well as feeling as if they fit in less (57% vs 63%).

More must be done to understand why so many students do not feel as if they belong or fit into a wider community during their UCL experience. Within the academic sphere, the Student Priorities for Education Report suggests that "there tends to be sufficient opportunities to develop a sense of belonging to a programme cohort, but more could be done to help develop department and faculty cohort belonging".

In addition, it is worth considering whether certain demographics and groups of students feel this disconnect more acutely. The Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy touches upon this area in some of its objectives, such as the aim to "Facilitate the development of inclusive personal networks and enable a sense of belonging in a culturally diverse context", and creating these networks would make significant strides in improving a sense of community for UCL students.

UCL is making strides in its attempt to respond to this issue through the creation of the UCL Belonging Project. This project aims to ensure that UCL "offers an inclusive community where students feel valued, supported... allowing for a truly exceptional student experience that promotes student led innovation, advancement and entrepreneurship" in line with Key Enabler A ("Giving our students the best support, facilities and opportunities") of the UCL 2034 Strategy.

The project is seeking to work on some of the key themes of belonging across UCL, such as variations at department and teaching levels, belonging amongst BME student groups, students living off campus and satellite campuses. This initiative, which is accompanied by a Belonging Project Steering Group, is a welcome step and one that the SU is eager to assist in, with the hope that meaningful action will come about as a result.

One area that can also play a crucial role in creating effective bonds throughout the student journey is the presence of a religious community for students of faith. Whilst both UCL and Students' Union UCL are secular institutions, both organisations are committed to providing an inclusive environment where students and staff of all religions, and none, can thrive.

In addition, there are facilities and organisations in place to support students to practice their faith, such as the UCL prayer, worship and meditation facilities in the new Student Centre, and Students' Union faith groups affiliated as societies. These groups and facilities provide a space for students of faith to meet, share their experiences and create communities across campus.

However, as with feelings of belonging, there exists a significant barrier in understanding the experience of students of faith because there is little or no data regarding these student groups. Without student feedback we cannot fully cater to student needs, and it would therefore be extremely beneficial if UCL and/or the Students' Union were to regularly collect feedback from students of faith, or at the very least look into running a one-off project to engage with this large group of students.

Data:

- 62% of students agreed that they "feel part of a community of staff and students" (NSS).
- 61% of UCL students feel a sense of belonging, compared to 69% across the UK (WonkHe SU Impact Survey).

Recommendations:

UCL	Students' Union
U10: Begin to collect data on the experience of students in relation to their faith at UCL, keeping a clear distinction between faith and culture.	S8: Work with faith-based societies to build collaboration and engagement, including collecting more meaningful data on students of faith.
B6: Conduct research on students' sense of belonging in order to identify why students don't feel like part of a community and whether this affects any particular group of students.	
B7: Implement the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy priority to facilitate the development of inclusive personal networks across UCL.	

c) Housing

Another hugely important aspect of both mental and social student wellbeing is student accommodation and housing. As an issue, this is important to consider in its constituent parts, as students can have varied living circumstances depending on the individual and their stage of the UCL experience. Students face different opportunities and challenges depending on their unique housing situation, whether they are in UCL or privately owned halls of residence, are living at home with their family, or are renting in the private sector.

With regards to students living in halls, the available data presents a mixed picture. In the New to UCL survey in 2018, 91% of students felt that UCL staff and student ambassadors made them feel welcome and that the moving in process was 'well-organised and straightforward'. However only 81% of respondents felt that their "accommodation was clean and everything in good working order when (they) moved in", suggesting that the issues of available facilities were more pertinent than the attitude of staff.

This theme can also be found in other sources. In the last Accommodation Exit Survey in 2017, the highest rating was given to the "helpfulness of reception staff" (80%) and the fourth highest to the "helpfulness of the Accommodation Office staff", whilst some of the lowest scores were for the "standard of kitchen" (54%) and the "standard of communal areas" (52%).

The reports from the democratically elected hall representatives from 2018-19 paint a similar picture. Many representatives praised the communication and responsiveness of staff within their residences, such as at Ramsay Hall where the representative commented that "the management team at Ramsay is truly very helpful and has been very prompt in replying to any query/ concern I have had".

However, there were also numerous examples of issues with cleanliness and maintenance, such as issues of "pest control" raised at Schafer House or general "room for improvement" in areas of maintenance which would "significantly enhance residents' experiences" at John Dodgson Hall.

This is particularly pertinent given the extremely high sums of money spent by UCL students on these residences, something backed up by the Accommodation Exit Survey in 2017, where only 43% of respondents rated the "value for money of (their) Halls or House" positively. It is therefore imperative that the Accommodation services and Students' Union UCL continue to work in tandem to make sure that all halls of residence are both affordable and of a high quality.

Financial issues also present a significant challenge to the wellbeing of students living in private accommodation across London, and it is concerning that this situation seems to be getting worse due to citywide and national forces. According to the 2018 Accommodation Costs Survey run by the NUS and Unipol, average student rents across the UK have increased by over a third since 2012/13, and accommodation costs now account for 73% of the average student loan, up from 58% six years before.

The issue of student accommodation costs was also highlighted within the review of Post-18 education and funding by Philip Augar in May 2019. The report recommends that "the Office for Students (OfS) should examine the cost of student accommodation more closely and work with students and providers to improve the quality and consistency of data about costs, rents, profits and quality". It is imperative that both UCL and Students' Union UCL lobby the government and the OfS to implement Augar's recommendations, recognising the urgency of the issue of the costs and quality of student accommodation.

Data:

- 43% of students rated the "value for money" of their Halls or House as positive (Accommodation Exit Survey).
- Accommodation costs now account for 73% of the average student loan (NUS Accommodation Survey).

Recommendations:

UCL	Students' Union
U11: Conduct an audit on maintenance and cleanliness issues of UCL and privately-owned accommodation raised in recent years.	S9: Improve support for Hall Reps and their ability to influence change and improvement in student accommodation.
B8: Lobby the OfS and government to implement the recommendation from the Augar Report in relation to student accommodation.	

STUDENTS' UNION UCL

Section 3: Physical Wellbeing

a) Physical Activity

Physical health is a crucial factor in overall student wellbeing, and an indispensable part of this is staying physically active. This backed up by the results from the British Active Students Survey conducted by the ukactive Research Institute and the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) in 2018, which suggests that "active students have higher wellbeing, inclusion and perceptions of employability and attainment compared to inactive students".

According to the survey, personal wellbeing scores were significantly better for students who did more than 150 minutes a week of physical activity than for those who conducted less than 30 minutes. The former group also reported feeling more worthwhile (7.3 vs 6.4 out of 10), having better life satisfaction (7.1 vs 6.2), feeling happier (6.8 vs 5.8) and feeling less anxious (4.3 vs 5.1) than their sedentary counterparts.

The Students' Union coordinates and delivers all opportunities for students to get involved in physical activity initiatives on campus, providing a huge variety of activities accounting for all levels of commitment and fitness. This includes Project Active, a set of beginner classes and social leagues that were attended 2770 times by 1070 students in 2018/19, up 16.5% from 2017/18.

In addition, students can get involved in Team UCL, which has over 75 membership-based sports clubs and which had 5850 members in 2018/19. The SU places great emphasis on enabling these clubs to be as inclusive and supportive as possible, with mandatory Welfare Officers in each club and access to a ring-fenced Welfare Campaign fund to support wellbeing initiatives.

There are also facilities on-campus for physical exercise, particularly Bloomsbury Fitness, a low-cost gym for UCL students and staff that is IFI disabled access qualified, alongside offering a wide variety of classes, equipment and personal trainers.

However, more effective spaces which can be considered a home by the UCL students who use them would increase the effectiveness of what the Students' Union could deliver with regards to physical activity. With this in mind, the Students' Union will continue to lobby UCL for more space on campus in order to deliver Performance Programme and Project Active activity. It is also essential that sports facilities are central to the campus development in East London.

There is also evidence that some groups of students such as postgraduate students are less involved in physical activity than their undergraduate counterparts. According to research undertaken by Project Active, 50% of UCL postgraduate respondents take part in less physical activity than they did as an undergraduate, and 87% of postgraduates would like to take part in more physical activity.

Of these respondents, 58% said they would most like to take part in physical activity with other postgraduate students, providing a potential roadmap for how to better engage this group. This was also true for another group of students who may be using the available provisions for physical activity less than their counterparts, namely disabled students. According to the same data, 60% of postgraduate students with a disability would most like to take part in physical activity with other students with a disability.

Based on this survey, Project Active made a series of recommendations, such as providing for more postgraduate specific activity including postgraduate 'activators' or 'leaders', offering more activity led by a professional coach or instructor and focussing on the physical and mental health benefits of physical activity in marketing and communication.

It is essential that these goals are championed by UCL and Students' Union UCL as a whole, and that all UCL students are aware of the benefits of physical activity to overall wellbeing. In conjunction, all UCL students should feel confident in accessing the services that Students' Union UCL provides in this area, and these services should be tailored and appealing to all groups of students.

Data:

- 50% of UCL postgraduate respondents take part in less physical activity than they did as an undergraduate (Project Active).
- 87% of postgraduates would like to take part in more physical activity (Project Active).

Recommendations:

UCL	Students' Union
U12: Provide sufficient space on campus for the Students' Union delivery of Performance Programme and Project Active activity.	S10: Provide more bespoke activities for Postgraduate students that fit around their interested as well as their study / personal commitments.
	S11: Champion the physical and mental health benefits of physical activity and marketing and communication for SU services in this area.
B9: Ensure that the development of UCL East includes appropriate sports facilities.	

b) Sleep

The importance of sleep is another crucial factor in the area of physical wellbeing particularly in a learning environment, with multiple studies demonstrating a link between sleep, cognition and memory consolidation. There is also strong evidence emerging that napping is extremely beneficial, with studies demonstrating that naps can restore alertness, enhance performance and process information in a deeper way, enabling learners to achieve greater insight into and draw new conclusions.

With this in mind, many workplaces are introducing sleep pods or nap facilities, including Google, the Huffington Post, NASA and Nike. Within the HE sector, several US universities introduced such facilities, and this trend has been picked up in the UK in recent years, with provision for sleep or nap facilities being provided by Universities (such as the Manchester University library) and Students' Unions (UEA SU, Essex SU, Teesside SU) alike.

Evidence is also emerging that a demand for such facilities may exist within UCL. A survey of almost 750 students run by the SU in 2019 concluded that 70% of students were in support of the provision of a napping facility. Amongst those who were not in support of such a facility, concerns centred around potential sacrifice of study space (61% of negative responses), the fact it could be seen to encourage overworking (33%), this being an improper alternative to home (17%) and hygiene concerns (12%).

Whilst addressing these concerns is key, Students' Union UCL will be looking to move forward with proposals for sleep or napping provision on campus, publishing more detailed plans during the 2019-20 academic year as part of a wider campaign promoting the benefits of healthy sleeping amongst all UCL students. UCL's support on this issue will be crucial, and if such provisions could be put in place it would provide a positive step in improving UCL student's physical wellbeing.

Data:

- 70% of students surveyed in 2019 were in support of a napping facility on campus (Students' Union UCL).

UCL	Students' Union
B10: Develop and implement a UCL Student Sleep Strategy, which includes provision for nap spaces on campus and a guide into healthy sleep.	

Recommendations

UCL

<u>Section 1: Mental Wellbeing</u>

U1: Reword student survey questions around mental health within the New to UCL and Student Experience Surveys to be more inclusive of undiagnosed conditions, using language such as 'mental health difficulties' or 'poor mental wellbeing'.

U2: Create a guide Transition Support Plan for students entering UCL with pre-existing mental health conditions.

U3: Ensure the implementation of the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy objective 1F ("Facilitate exchanges of expertise, research and experiences with regard to student health and wellbeing").

U4: Improve the dedicated information offered to disabled students at UCL throughout their journey, from pre-arrival to graduation.

U5: Engage with the Disabled Students' Network on their report and recommendations on disabled students' experience at

U6: Increase scholarship and bursary funds available.

U7: UCL Careers to work more closely with academic departments, improving department specific careers events and guidance.

U8: Collect feedback on students' experiences of signposting throughout their time at UCL.

U9: Concentrate on equipping staff so they feel confident in giving support to students at first contact, and then signposting if necessary.

<u>Section 2: Social Wellbeing</u>

U10: Begin to collect data on the experience of students in relation to their faith at UCL, keeping a clear distinction between faith and culture.

U11: Conduct an audit on maintenance and cleanliness issues of UCL and privately-owned accommodation raised in recent years.

<u>Section 3: Physical Wellbeing</u>

U12: Provide sufficient space on campus for the Students' Union delivery of Performance Programme and Project Active activity.

Students' Union UCL

Section 1: Mental Wellbeing

S1: Introduce Mental Health First Aid Training for our Welfare Officers across our 300 Clubs & Societies.

S2: Improve awareness of the Heads Up Fund, which ensures that students get quicker access to psychological and counselling support when they need it.

S3: Collect data and work with the Disabled Students' Network to ensure that disabled students have a positive experience of Welcome Week activities.

S4: Implement the objective set out in the 2017-21 strategic plan to "develop ways of better inducting, training, communicating with, and recognising the hard work of our great student staff team".

S5: Improve the process of utilising the network of student representatives (including welfare officers in Club & Societies and Academic Reps) to cascade information and guidance to students.

S6: Review the online information provided regarding support services, making sure it is up to date, accessible and consistent with UCL's online information.

Section 2: Social Wellbeing

S7: Introduce mechanisms to monitor PGT and PGR satisfaction at the 2020 Welcome Fair and make changes if necessary.

S8: Work with faith-based societies to build collaboration and engagement, including collecting more meaningful data on students of faith.

S9: Improve support for Hall Reps and their ability to influence change and improvement in student accommodation.

Section 3: Physical Wellbeing

S10: Provide more bespoke activities for Postgraduate students that fit around their interested as well as their study / personal commitments.

S11: Champion the physical and mental health benefits of physical activity and marketing and communication for SU services in this area.

Both

Section 1: Mental Wellbeing

B1: Look into a communication and research campaign related to full-time students who work over 15 hours per week.

B2: Look into areas where further student job opportunities can be increased.

B3: Monitor the career motivations of UCL students and implement any necessary changes in service delivery and student-facing activity.

Section 2: Social Wellbeing

B4: Increase the provision of postgraduate specific social events during the Welcome Period, especially those targeted at PGR students.

B5: Ensure the implementation of the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy objective 2D ("Identify best practice and strengthen the co-ordination of UCL and the Students' Union's many induction activities, ensuring that all students receive a welcoming start to their life at UCL").

B6: Conduct research on students' sense of belonging in order to identify why students don't feel like part of a community and whether this affects any particular group of students.

B7: Implement the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy priority to facilitate the development of inclusive personal networks across UCL.

B8: Lobby the OfS and government to implement the recommendation from the Augar Report in relation to student accommodation.

Section 3: Physical Wellbeing

B9: Ensure that the development of UCL East includes viable sports facilities.

B10: Develop and implement a UCL Student Sleep Strategy, which includes provision for nap spaces on campus and a guide into healthy sleep.

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UNION UCL