Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Law students put research into practice to support international human rights protection

Postgraduate Laws students at UCL are addressing real-world human rights protection issues by providing cutting-edge legal research to organisations working to protect human rights around the world.

Each year, the Public International Law Pro Bono Project, which began life as a PhD and LLM student initiative, brings together a competitively selected group of students, who collaborate and offer their expertise on a pro bono (for free) basis.

The project helped the organisation Redress, which seeks justice for survivors of torture, to prepare reports on the UK's compliance with its obligations, which were submitted to the UK Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights and to the UN Committee Against Torture.

In addition, the project has prepared a case study on compliance with international humanitarian law for the International Committee of the Red Cross, posted on its 'IHL in Action' webpage.
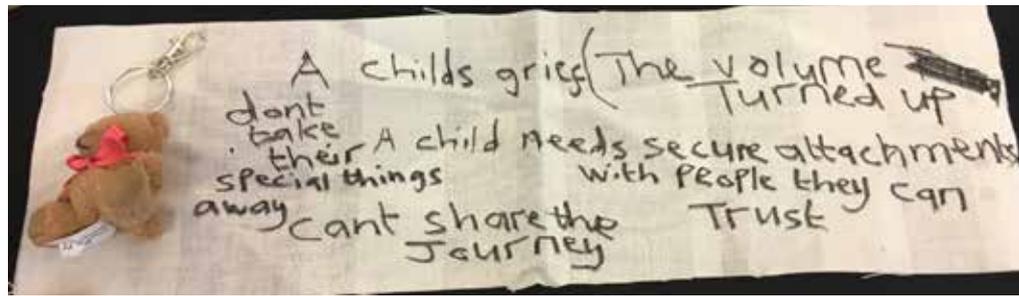
Since 2017, more than 60 UCL students have participated in the project, with support and supervision provided by faculty members and UCL Laws doctoral students.

Helping to achieve **Target 16.3**

Developing an SDG Target that puts people at the heart of legal frameworks

Experts from UCL Laws have helped to define the UN's SDG Target on civil justice and provided guidance on ways to measure progress towards people-centred justice systems across the world.

Professor Pascoe Pleasence (UCL Laws) and colleagues have played a pivotal role in developing

Target 16.3, which calls on countries to 'Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all'.

"To meet this target, countries must develop justice systems that consider the needs of the people they are designed to serve," explains Professor Pleasence.

To help them achieve this, Professor Pleasence has advised on and helped to develop clear guidelines and frameworks to enable countries to provide better access to civil justice, and mechanisms to measure progress. These include providing a framework for countries to carry out surveys that help understand people's everyday legal problems and experiences of their local justice system.

Helping to achieve **Target 16.3**

UCL clinic provides access to justice for local community

Legal problems and ill-health often coincide. Without intervention, problems can escalate – with deteriorating health leading to financial difficulties, worsening living conditions and further stress and anxiety.

In 2016, the UCL Centre for Access to Justice established an integrated legal advice clinic, which provides free and legally aided advice to the local community in Stratford, East London, close to the university's new UCL East campus on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

"Often the people who need legal help most are unsure of their rights and can ill-afford the advice they need," explains Rachel Knowles (UCL Laws), the centre's Head of Legal Practice and a practising solicitor.

At the clinic, UCL Laws students, with supervision from qualified lawyers, provide free legal advice on a range of social welfare issues to the local community. In the seven years since the clinic was established, almost 200 UCL Law students have supported more than 500 people with legal advice and casework.

Among the people the clinic has helped are a woman struggling to obtain a disabled parking permit to support her son with autism, and a local resident who was left without accommodation and had to appeal to the courts to access housing benefit.

Helping to achieve
Target 16.3

Helping people who lived in care as children to understand their past

UCL information researchers are exploring how child social care records are recorded, stored and accessed, so they can help to enhance the memories and sense of self of individuals who have been in care.

An estimated 400,000 adults in Britain have experienced out-of-home care at some stage of their childhood.

"Many people who grow up in care have gaps in their childhood memories, including unanswered questions such as 'Why was I taken into care?' or 'Where did I live?'," explains Professor Elizabeth Shepherd (UCL Information ▶

Taught modules at UCL supporting SDG16 in 2021–22

UCL faculty

Number of modules
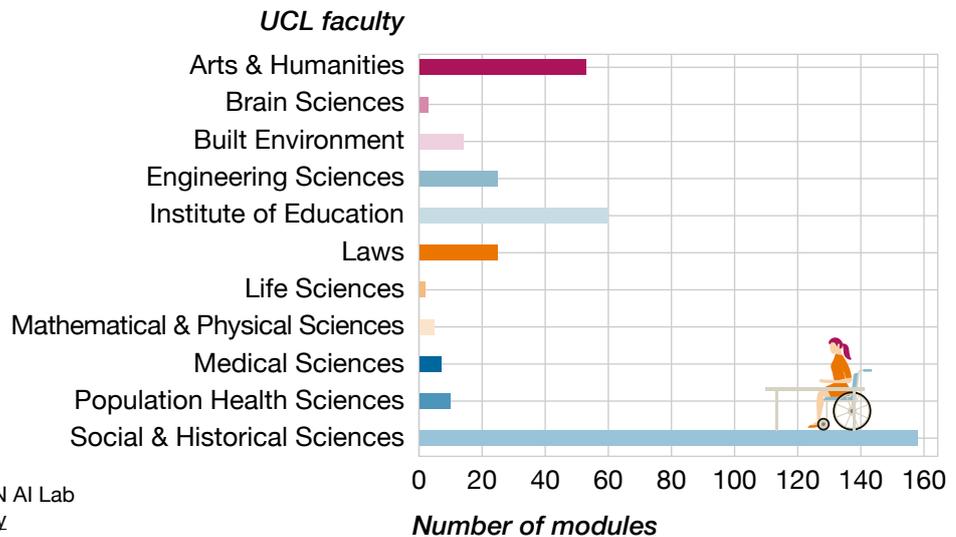
Source: PPMI, a partner in the UN AI Lab – more details in the methodology

695

SDG16-related policy citations in 2016–20

Source: Overton – see methodology

Number of UCL's research publications supporting SDG16 by faculty in 2016–20

Graph based on keywords searches of publication databases using a set of SDG keywords developed by Elsevier. Read more about the methodology used on the SDGs Initiative website

UCL faculty

Number of publications
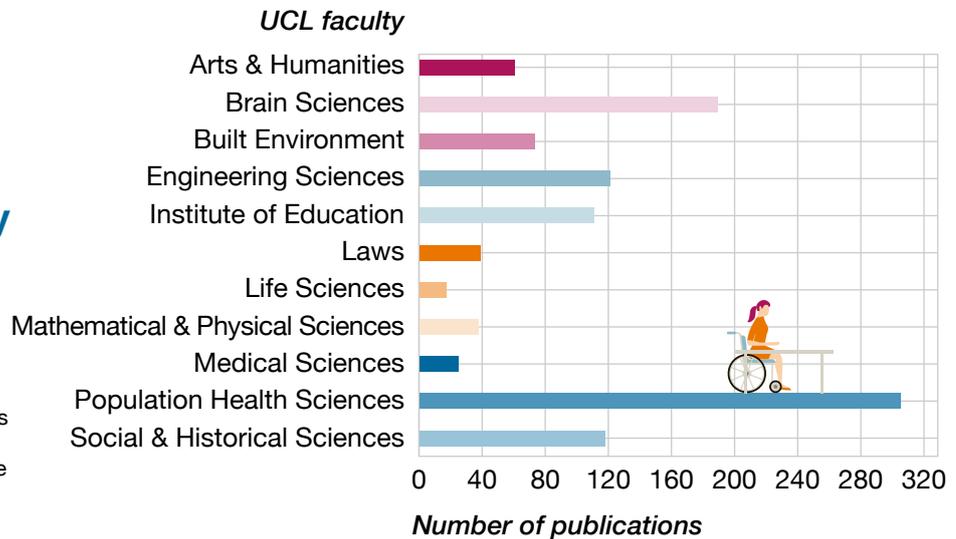
Studies), who leads Memory–Identity–Rights in Records–Access (MIRRA), a participatory research project investigating recordkeeping practices in child social care in England and Wales.

Each looked-after child has a file where social workers, educators, health professionals and others document details of the individual's life. For many care leavers, this is the only 'album' they have from their childhood, but the records can be difficult to access, heavily 'redacted' and rarely include the child's perspective.

"Individuals who have lived in care have often had difficult experiences as children and making the transition into independent adult life can be tough," says Professor Shepherd. "Our research highlights the vital role care records can play in helping care leavers to get a better understanding of their past, to help them in the present and future.

Helping to achieve **Target 16.10**

Preventing torture in Chile through policy and legal reform

Research on torture prevention in Chile by Dr Par Engstrom (UCL Institute of the Americas) is informing legal and policy reform to reduce violence against prisoners and hold perpetrators to account.

Helping to achieve **Target 16.1**

25.9%

of UCL's SDG16-related publications are in the top 10% most cited for all research of similar papers in 2016–20

Source: Scopus and Clarivate – see methodology

47.3%

of UCL's SDG16-related research publications are international collaborations, 2016–20

Source: Scopus and Clarivate – see methodology

DISCOVER MORE

Read more on these activities and other examples of how UCL is helping to achieve SDG16 are on the UCL SDGs Initiative website.

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