A Guide to Sustainable UCL

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Policy and Strategy

Sustainability Policy

UCL has a Sustainability Policy that sets out its high-level sustainability objectives. This Policy has been signed off by UCL President and Dr Michael Spence AC and is reviewed annually by the Sustainability Steering Group as part of the management system annual review.

Targets and Strategy

The Sustainability Policy is supported by the Sustainability Strategy. The Strategy was approved by UCL Council in 2019. A set of targets have been established to reduce our environmental and social impact. Specific areas of operation also have dedicated policies and plans. See below for further details:

- Construction & Refurbishment
- Emissions & Discharges
- Energy & Carbon
- Community Involvement
- Biodiversity
- Waste Management
- Travel & Transport
- Sustainable Procurement
- Water
    - We include water as part of our Net Zero Carbon Target as a Scope 3 element

Annual report

UCL's sustainability progress against our targets is reported annually. A copy of our Annual Report (2019 – 2020) can be found here. Read UCL's Sustainability Annual Report

This Annual Report (2019-20) reflects the progress we have made one year since the launch of UCL's new Sustainability Strategy "Change Possible" and celebrates achievements from across the UCL community.

Staff for Sustainability

Governance

Sustainability is a working partnership throughout UCL. UCL takes its sustainability commitments extremely seriously. High level sponsorship, leadership and resource allocation for our sustainability programme is provided by the Provost and the Council through the University Senior Management Team (SMT). UCL's sustainability programme is reviewed annually by the Sustainability Steering Group and SMT.

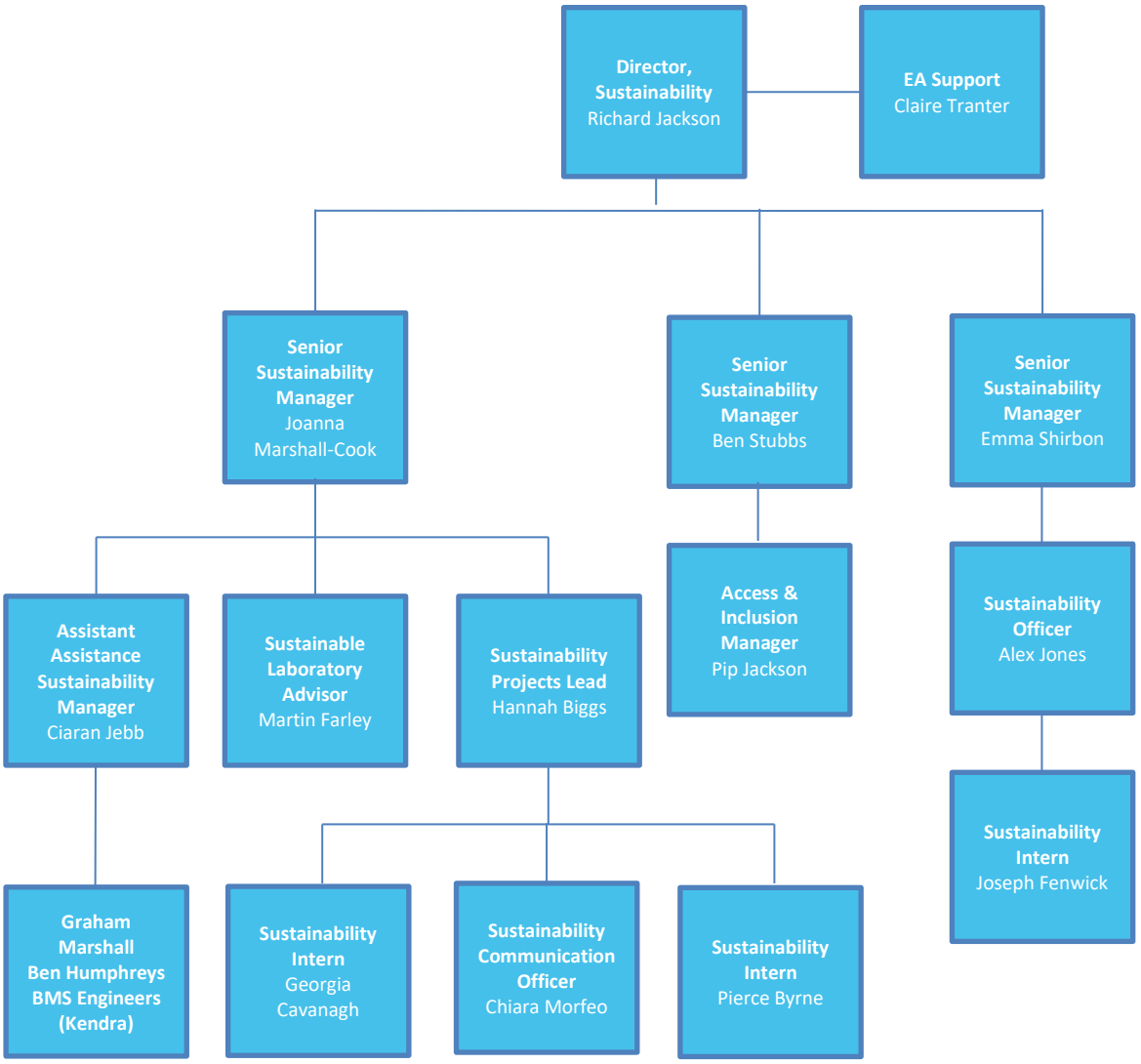
Sustainability Steering Group (SSG)

The SSG has been identified by the Senior Management Team as the forum for all key stakeholder representations (including students and Trade Union representatives) to meet, review and agree key environmental/sustainability initiatives, propose targets and monitor performance. Decisions made by the SSG are reported to UCL's Senior Management Team and, subject to the nature of decision, to UCL's Council. Terms of reference for the SSG and the responsibilities for the Chair can be found here.

The UCL Sustainability Team

The UCL Sustainability Team drives forward the university's key sustainability aims. The team works with the UCL community to embed sustainability into research, buildings, and behaviours at UCL, and beyond. The work seeks to improve sustainability literacy, increase efficiency, save money, and help create more pleasant spaces to work and study. Find out more about what we do, and view the team profiles. All staff at UCL Sustainability can be contacted via the Sustainable UCL webpage.

Sustainable UCL Team Structure



Finance for Sustainability

Capital budget

UCL is spending £1.2 billion on its estate over the next 10 years. As part of this, UCL requires all capital and strategic maintenance projects to achieve the requirements set out in its Sustainable Building Standard. This sets highly ambitious targets for the integration of sustainability into projects.

In addition, UCL will be investing £4.5 million in energy saving improvements/environmental projects to existing buildings over the next 5 years. This investment will include renewable energy projects, greening projects, insulation, more efficient equipment (such as boilers and lights), and improving the central control system for heating, cooling and lighting. Energy bill savings from these actions will be reinvested into further energy efficiency projects.

In the past year, some of the energy/environmental projects have included:

- Improvements to the building management systems
- Investment in new lighting systems
- Replacement of inefficient lab equipment

Operational budget

In addition, UCL continues to provide financial support to several operational sustainability initiatives including:

- Engagement with the UCL community through Green Impact, LEAF, Switch Off and other initiatives
- Support for department initiatives

UCL provides a dedicated budget of over £50,000 a year for sustainability engagement with the UCL community, plus over £250,000 for environmental improvement projects. This has remained constant over the past five years to enable the delivery of UCL's strategic goals. For further information see our website.

Green Champions

Green Champions are a network of staff and student volunteers. Currently UCL has over 150 Green Champions making UCL a sustainable and healthy place to work and study: Green

Champions have catalysed new initiatives that are now being adopted across UCL, from vegetarian catering to paperless meetings and stair climbing competitions with Jeremy Bentham.

Green Champions support UCL's sustainability agenda and help improve UCL's environmental performance. The UCL Academic Manual stipulates that all departments should have a member of staff charged with environmental responsibilities and having a Green Champion is an excellent way to achieve this. To find out more view our Green Champion page.

Environmental Auditing & Management System

UCL's Environmental Sustainability Management System

An Environmental Sustainability Management System (ESMS) is a tool for managing an organisation's impact on the environment. It provides a structured approach to reducing pollution, ensuring legal compliance, and driving continuous improvements to environmental and sustainability performance.

UCL is certified to ISO 14001 & ISO 50001 international standard for environmental management and energy management, covering UCL's entire UK activities, To find out more about what the ISO accreditation means view our website here .

Auditing

As part of our management system, we complete environmental and energy audits annually to ensure impacts are being effectively monitoring and managed across the university.

Ethical Investment & Banking

Responsible investment

The University has adopted investment strategies that seek to minimise and ideally eliminate irresponsible corporate behaviour.

The full investment policy and policy for socially responsible investment can be found here.

Student representation on Investment Committees

The university commits to student representation on its committees:

- Finance Committee – Student representation is provided by the Democracy Operations

and Community Officer of the UCL Students Union, see here

- Investment Committee – Student representation is provided by the Democracy Operations and Community Officer of the UCL Students Union, see here.

A full list of formal committees and reporting lines for each committee can be found here.

Public List of Investments

The University will publish its portfolio of holdings on an annual basis, to the Annual Report, Financial Statements, and Investment Portfolios website.

Commitment to screen out specific sectors

UCL has made a commitment to screen out all Fossil Fuels, please see a copy of the meeting minutes where Council agreed to divest from Fossil Fuels. The announcement was made at the same time as the Sustainability strategy launch.

The University will adopt investment strategies that seek to minimise and ideally eliminate irresponsible corporate behaviour. UCL's policy for socially responsible investment details the ethical, social, environmental and governance issues which it will focus on include:

- Environmental degradation
- Armament sales to military regimes
- Human rights violations
- Institutionalization of poverty through discriminatory market practices
- Racial or sexual discrimination
- Tobacco production and manufacture

The University has a particular concern in relation to fossil fuels and will not invest in companies involved in fossil fuel extraction or production.

Reinvestment Divested Funds

UCL's Investment Committee undertakes 'negative screening', i.e., the exclusion of stocks from the existing portfolio on the grounds that such stocks do not meet the ethical standards of UCL. The University will seek to identify and promote low or zero carbon investments where available without detrimental impact to investment risks and returns.

UCL 's investment portfolio reports 2020 shows investments in renewable holdings.

Transparency and Accountability

Information about UCL's investment practices and procedures can be found here.

Carbon Management

UCL has a Carbon Management Plan to outline its objectives for delivering carbon emission reductions. You can read the Carbon Management Plan here. The scope covers all UCL operations including student accommodation (both managed by UCL and managed externally).

This Carbon Management Plan is an update of the 2016-2020 Degrees of Change Plan, the Carbon Management Plan has been developed to deliver the commitment to be a net zero carbon institution by 2030 and to have net zero carbon buildings by 2024. These commitments were approved by the UCL Council as part of the Sustainability Strategy in 2019.
The zero-carbon target covers scope 1 and 2 emissions and scope 3 emissions from waste, water, products/procurement, and organizational related travel.
The zero-carbon plan also sets targets for staff and student commuting and student start and end of term travel (although these sit outside of the zero carbon by 2030 commitment).

Workers' Rights

Living Wage Foundation

Since 2010 UCL has agreed that all new contracts will pay London Living Wage to contracted employees for the University. In 2014, UCL agreed to pay all interns London Living Wage as part of the University's updated Internships, Work Experience and Volunteering Policy, which can be found here.

UCL also aims to protect our lowest paid staff from the effects of the current crisis. The lowest rates of pay at UCL currently exceed the Living Wage Foundation's campaign rate.

UCL is working to become an accredited Living Wage Employer, through The Living Wage Foundation, which recognises UCL paying all staff the Living Wage or London Living Wage as a minimum.

Equality for staff employed through a university held contract

In October 2019, UCL committed to ensuring that outsourced security, cleaning, and catering staff receive the same or equivalent pay and benefits as directly employed staff,

following constructive negotiations with UNISON, UCL's recognised trade union.

The following website pages provide more details

- Working with external providers
- Colleagues in security, cleaning, portering and catering - Pay and Benefits
- Modern Day Slavery Policy

A Fairtrade University

UCL and UCL's Student Union jointly participate in the NUS Fairtrade University and College Award and following an audit in May 2020, UCL has achieved "Fairtrade University 1 star status". This recognises UCL's many different activities that take place to promote Fairtrade, including purchasing Fairtrade products, campaigning, teaching, research and outreach. The award is valid for 2 years, until June 2022. UCL intends to develop further work and action plans in order to achieve 2-star award in 2022. For more details please see here.

Monitoring and reforming the university supply chain

As well as financial implications, the procurement of goods and services is one of the most significant direct and indirect environmental and social impacts of the University. UCL recognises the need to help its communities make informed and sustainable purchases to address these impacts. For more details, please see our responsible procurement website

Sustainable Food

Sustainable Food Policy

UCL has established a Healthy and Sustainable Food Policy and Strategy to ensure that UCL meets high environmental and socially responsible standards for the food offered through its catering partners, and to encourage healthy and sustainable food production and consumption. For further details see our Healthy and Sustainable Food Policy and Strategy.

The policy covers all the catering, hospitality and vending services operating under the UCL centrally managed catering contract including temporary facilities where in use. The Policy supports the strategic objectives detailed within the UCL Catering Services Strategy and it is recommended that the Policy or commitments contained within it are implemented across

other areas of UCL serviced by separate locally managed contracts.

The sustainability food policy is annually reported on to the SSG.

Contracts

Tender specification documents for UCL's food suppliers include the requirement for service and supply standards to be met and delivered, as outlined within the Sustainability Strategy for UCL and implemented through the UCL Healthy and Sustainable Food Policy. The Contractor will familiarise themselves with both documents and as appropriate, contribute to their implementation, on-going revision and development.

Sustainable Food Framework

UCL achieved 2 stars out of 3 in the Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA) Food Made Good award, and will recertify in 2021.

Sustainable Food Projects

UCL provides space and support for student and staff-led sustainable food projects. Community Food Growing Projects See some of our projects below:

- Bentham's Farm- UCL's student-led allotment project
- IOE Garden Project: UCL's student-led gardening project aimed at boosting biodiversity on the roof of the UCL IOE
- The Global Generation Skip Garden: Movable community garden being built with students from the Bartlett School of Architecture.
- The School of Pharmacy Medicinal Garden: A staff led project aimed at educating students on medicinal plants.

Staff and Student Engagement

Engagement Strategy

UCL is committed to student and staff engagement in sustainable development. This is supported by two of our commitments in our Sustainability Strategy. Every student will have the opportunity to study and be involved in Sustainability by 2024 and we will increase our sustainability research with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our communications and engagement plan provides details.

Student and Staff Engagement Actions

UCL is committed to the transparency of its activities and reports annually on its progress on sustainability. UCL will seek to provide information on its activities and approaches through the Sustainable UCL website, regular participation in events, close working with the sector, UCL staff, students and local community and wider industry and by using case studies and other mechanisms to share information. View our Engagement Strategy and Action Plan

Opportunities for Oversight & Involvement in UCL Sustainability Strategy & Plans

A 'Design UCL's Future' campaign was launched in May 2018 with members of UCL and the external community. The consultation ran until January 2019 and had three main aims:

1. Raise awareness about sustainability at UCL, our impacts and how they are being managed; and generate excitement about the new sustainability strategy
2. Generate ideas and suggestions from a large, diverse range of people at UCL and the external community to inform the strategy
3. Stimulate sustainability engagement, ownership and leadership by members of UCL

A range of consultation approaches were developed including:

Face to face engagement

- The UCL Sustainability Team has presented at several existing fora, from Faculty and Departmental meetings, PS Divisional meetings to UCLU society meetings.
- Interactive workshops were held by the UCL Sustainability Team with staff, students and members of the local community interested in this agenda.
- Environmental installations were displayed in the Front Quad and Cloisters during first and second term and the Sustainability Team were on hand to engage with and discuss the Strategy.
- Expert focus groups of staff and students were formed to help develop each of the signature campaigns.

Online

- An online survey was created to encourage feedback on the Strategy and signature campaigns.

During Sustainability Week in Autumn 2019 and throughout November we held consultation

events about the Climate Change: Action signature programmes to allow UCL students and staff to tell us their views and shape the direction of the carbon management plan. Find out more here.

Through the consultation, we reached over 20,000 people – largely the result of social media posts, and online campaigns. Of this reach, we received detailed comments from 843 individuals. Some of the main comments included:

- Taking a broader view of sustainability – one which considers both the environmental and social impact of the institution
- Embedding the principles of sustainability throughout our education, communication, and engagement activities
- Empowering people to take action – with many respondents expressing the view that sustainability challenges need to be addressed by people
- Wellbeing and healthy environments need to be addressed
- Climate Change and carbon emissions remains a major issue with many students reporting a sense of fear and powerlessness with regards to tackling climate change. Individuals felt that UCL needs to take action on all aspects of climate change.
- Reducing resource use and waste, particularly focused on the use of plastics
- The need to address traceability and transparency in the supply chain. There was a concern that we are buying goods, products and services without understanding their provenance.
- Whilst individuals acknowledged that UCL is undertaking research to tackle global issues, they wanted more information on our research activities. Moreover, there was also a strong interest in using UCL research community to tackle UCL challenges (as part of a Living Lab programme).
- To fully embed sustainability more visible leadership is required.

The new Strategy has sought to take account of the points raised.

As part of our ongoing commitment to engage on carbon management and environmental management, UCL Sustainability provides an annual update on the carbon and environmental management plan to SSG and seeks views from the group on the direction of work. The student sustainability council is the chance for students to shape UCL and the

Students Union's Sustainability Visions.
We have established working groups on key areas of the strategy to gain input and insight from interested parties and we plan to create a staff sustainability forum.

Student Inductions

Sustainable UCL provides sustainability inductions to new students via departmental induction weeks. Inductions include information on UCL's sustainability policy/ plan, sustainability issues and student engagement opportunities. Details of training and induction material can be found here.

Environmental and sustainability campaigns

UCL actively supports environmental sustainability campaigns including an annual Sustainability week. In 2019 we hosted Sustainability Week – It's time to take action.

In February 2021 we hosted 28 Days of Sustainability a four-week programme that presented a mix of activities to suit the Covid restrictions.

UCL Sustainability Careers Week – Sustainability Fortnight.

UCL Careers annually hosts an Environmental Careers themed week - a whole week of activities designed to help students find out more about opportunities in the sustainability sector, including information on routes in and how to gain valuable work experience. In 2020/21, this was a Sustainability Careers Fortnight – recognizing the success of previous years' events. For more details see here:

Green Impact

Green Impact is a UCL-wide environmental competition and accreditation scheme that allows departments and divisions across the UCL to improve their environmental impact, support UCL's Sustainability Strategy and engage peers and colleagues with these essential issues.

Student Sustainability Ambassadors

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/sustainable/students/sustainability-ambassadors

Engagement with local communities

UCL offers several opportunities for staff and students to engage with local communities on sustainability projects. Through the UCLU Volunteering Services Unit, there are opportunities to connect with existing partners as well as develop new partnerships with local volunteering groups. Some examples can be found here.

Groups within UCL also engage with local communities on sustainability initiatives. These include:

- Mapping for Change
- UCL Extreme Citizen Science
- UCL Engineering Exchange
- Think & Do Sustainability Ambassadors

Funding for sustainability projects

UCL provides funding for students and staff undertaking sustainability projects via the Green Impact programme, see here.

The UCLU Volunteering services and UCL Innovation and Enterprise department also provide expert advice and training for students wanting to create social enterprises, see here.

The Change Makers supports staff-student partnership work. It provides opportunities, funding and resources for departments and faculties to work on educational enhancement projects with their students.

Staff Inductions

It is part of the UCL mandatory inductions courses that all new starters at UCL complete the University's introduction to Sustainability e-learning course – "Change possible: Be part of a Sustainable UCL". This cover's the University's sustainability policy, issues and areas for staff engagement. Details of training and induction material can be found here.

Trade Union

UCL views engagement with trade unions on sustainability issues a platform for further sustainability achievement. Currently we have one trade union representative on our Sustainability Steering Group. Details can be found here.

Student Representation

UCL has several formal committees, membership includes student representation:

- Council – Student representation is provided by the Education Officer & Democracy

Operations and Community Officer of the UCL Students Union, see here.

- Finance Committee – Student representation is provided by the Democracy Operations and Community Officer of the UCL Students Union, see here
- Estates matters are discussed at the Estates Management Committee but reported to the Finance Committee
- Investment Committee – Student representation is provided by the Democracy Operations and Community Officer of the UCL Students Union, see here.
- Education Committee – Student representation is provided by Students' Union Education Officer, Students' Union Welfare & International Officer and Students' Union Postgraduate Students' Officer, see here

A full list of formal committees and reporting lines for each committee can be found here.

Students' Union

UCL's Student's Union (UCLU) is working towards incorporating sustainability as a core value into everything they do, to minimise the impact of their own operations, and to promote environmental and ethical initiatives across UCL's campus. The SU has developed a Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan for 2020-24.

To find out more view UCLU's Sustainability pages.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Commitment and Governance

UCL's commitment to education for sustainable development is detailed in the Sustainability Strategy and the commitment for all students to have the opportunity to study sustainability by 2024. UCL has the opportunity and responsibility to solve sustainability challenges through teaching and research, see here for details

UCLs Institutional 20-year strategy, UCL 2034, include six key principles, two of which embody our approach to ESD:

Principle 2: Integration of research and teaching - https://www.ucl.ac.uk/2034/themes/integrating-research-education

All aspects of the student experience at UCL should be truly outstanding. UCL will differentiate itself through an offer that explores how the creation and application of knowledge contributes to the resolution of the world's 'grand challenges'. Students will be attracted to UCL as a university that navigates the most pressing contemporary issues and explores how to synthesise and exploit disciplinary expertise in pursuit of knowledge and solutions to global problems. An innovative UCL education will prepare our students for a globalised world through studies of cultural diversity, global citizenship and leadership and a modern foreign language.

Principle 3: Addressing global challenges
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/2034/themes/global-challenges
This includes:
Launched in the late 2000s, the UCL Grand Challenges – of Global Health, Sustainable Cities, Cultural Understanding, Human Wellbeing, Transformative Technology and Justice & Equality – are the flagship embodiment of our institutional commitment to provide wise solutions to global challenges.

UCL's framework for ESD

The UCL Education Strategy is based on eight principles including 'Preparing students for the workplace and the world'. Priorities within the strategy include: developing opportunities for students to develop work related skills; embed a framework for work experiences and skills into all programmes.

Foremost in our approach is the education framework aimed at integrating research and education: The Connected Curriculum.

A framework for supporting ESD is provided as part of UCL's Connected Curriculum.

The Connected Curriculum aims to ensure that all UCL students are able to learn through participating in research and enquiry at all levels of their programme of study. It's also a chance to inspire education enhancement in all programmes, for example to:

- provide more blended or online learning opportunities
- enrich the learning experience by ensuring entire programmes of study are reviewed
- incorporate a more inclusive curriculum by giving students more exposure to disciplinary knowledge of scholars representing a truly global perspective.

It comprises six dimensions of connectivity, setting out a plan for a joined-up approach to

education. Dimension 3 is particularly relevant to ESD:

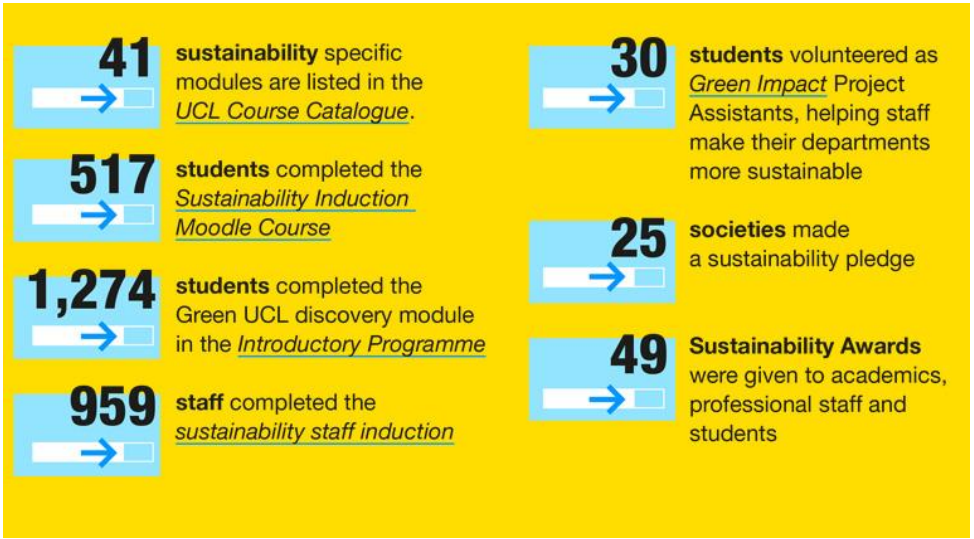
Students make connections across subjects and out to the world. This dimension focuses on the importance of students making conceptual connections between their own subjects and other disciplines.

At appropriate points in the programme of study, they should ideally be able to step outside their home discipline(s) by, for example, studying with students and scholars from outside their main subject field.

Students should have the opportunity to explore the implications of multidisciplinary perspectives for addressing global issues and challenges.

Reviewing & Reporting Progress

UCL has developed its own framework for monitoring ESD and we are building a baseline of modules that include Sustainability, to understand the way in which sustainability is being embedded into modules. We are working with our Sustainable Literacy Working Group to review how students have an opportunity to engage with these. We review performance via our formal committee SSG and report in our annual report (see extract below).



Further details on the Connected Curriculum, how it is measured, and support programmes can be found here:
Mapping impact and activity areas:
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/research-based-education/impact-and-measurement

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/research-based-education/resources-and-literature

In addition, UCL's sustainable education working group has been established which is identifying and implementing projects to achieve the commitment for all students to have the opportunity to study sustainability by 2024. This group reports into UCL's Sustainability Steering Group.

Supporting academic staff

UCL's approach to education for sustainability is set around the Connected Curriculum framework. The following guide sets out more about the connected curriculum and provides examples of where the connected curriculum has been applied across UCL. The document provides a list of online resources as well as support programmes which are offered.

Support and training for UCL staff is made available through UCL Arena, details of which can be found in the links below:
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/research-based-education/resources-and-literature
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/about-us/arena-centre

In addition, UCL's sustainable education working group has been established which is an open forum for staff to collaborate in developing UCL's approach to ESD.

Finally, specific resources and case studies to act as inspiration and support staff in integrating ESD are also available on our ESD webpages:

Education for sustainable development actions

UCL provides and promotes the opportunity for students and staff to use the university campus and operations as a focus for research or study. The Living Lab project works to unlock UCL's expertise and tackle sustainability challenges by bringing people together and using the campus as a test bed for new ideas. We report on our Living Lab projects as part of our annual report.
Use the links below to explore previous and ongoing Living Lab projects, find out more about using UCL's data in your research, connect with environmental researchers using the UCL Environment Domain, and contact the Sustainability Team to discuss your ideas for a project or research based on UCL's campus or operations.

Through its world-class research and teaching and external engagement, and the way it operates as an institution, UCL's community of staff and students is playing a leading role in responding to the challenges set out in the UN SDGs. Find out more here.

Equal access to higher education

Scholarships for asylum seekers and individuals who have been granted a status as a result of an asylum claim, but do not yet have access to student finance. The Access Opportunity Scholarship scheme provides 2 scholarships per year for students in this category. They can also apply for our general Undergraduate Funding and Access awards.
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/scholarships/ucl-access-opportunity-scholarship
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/scholarships/undergraduate-funding-and-access-awards

Support for students with irregular migration status

Our Access and Participation Plan includes 'forced migrants' which covers both categories
UCL's definition of 'Forced Migrant' can be found here
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/scholarships/undergraduate-funding-and-access-awards
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/scholarships/scholarships-finder