



## Teaching Excellence Framework UCL Narrative Submission 2017



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## Introduction

UCL made the following narrative submission to the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework, TEF.

TEF was introduced by the Government in 2016 'to recognise and reward excellent learning and teaching.' It is an annual exercise implemented by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). In 2016-17, participating institutions will receive TEF awards of Gold, Silver and Bronze.

Our narrative submission was supported by institution-wide data about teaching quality (from NSS), learning environment (including student retention) and student outcomes (Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey).

**Professor Anthony Smith**  
Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs)



## Context

*"Our goal is to make UCL a global leader in the integration of research and education, underpinning an inspirational student experience."*

**Professor Michael Arthur**  
UCL President and Provost

At UCL, we draw on our traditions of disruptive thinking and interdisciplinarity to offer our undergraduate students a 'research-based' education. We teach them what it means to do research, and how to conceptualise, pursue and present the results of their own lines of independent enquiry. We are ambitious for our students, and aim to develop them in the round, as global citizens, so that they secure highly-skilled employment on graduation. We attract an ethnically diverse and high-attaining cohort of intellectually curious and creative undergraduates, with around 42% of them joining us from outside the UK in 15-16. They achieve strong results at the end of their programme of study, with a consistent 89% of undergraduates achieving a first or 2:1 degree annually in the 13-16 period. We have high absolute continuation rates (indicator of 3.4% or 96.6%), a reflection of the support we offer students throughout their programmes, and we have an excellent track record of supporting them into employment (as our 95% employment and 84% highly-skilled employment indicators confirm). We also recognise, however, that our students are dissatisfied with some important elements of our provision, and, in particular, with how they are assessed and receive feedback. There was a specific fall in 14-15 in rates of satisfaction, and, although this may be related to this cohort's status as the first to pay the £9k tuition fee, our performance in the NSS has reinforced for us just how important it is that we respond quickly and directly to student concerns, given the sizeable investment they are making in their futures.

Our Education Strategy 2016-21 confirms how

seriously we have taken our student satisfaction metrics. Its objectives reflect our determination to address the issues that our students have identified, responding particularly to the impact of our recent growth, and the implications of an undergraduate cohort that is 14% larger in 15-16 than 13-14. We developed the strategy through wide-reaching consultation with staff and students and it sets out a clear path to improvement, predicated on a commitment to work in partnership with our students towards our objectives. The strategy is ambitious and we do not underestimate the scale of the task we have set ourselves.

Nevertheless, the Education Strategy is also evidence that our trajectory has more momentum than the metrics suggest. In this submission, we aim to offer a wider narrative of cultural change at institutional level: to provide evidence of the impact of sustained intellectual and financial investment in education at UCL which cannot yet fully be reflected in our metrics. Extensive change was inaugurated by the establishment of a new post, Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs), which Professor Anthony Smith took up in 2012, and the 2013 appointment of Professor Michael Arthur as UCL's President and Provost. UCL's ambition to become a global leader in the integration of research and education stems directly from their commitment to education as core to the university's mission, now embedded in our long-range institutional strategy, UCL 2034. In 2013, we also welcomed a new Director of the Centre for Advancing Learning and Teaching (CALT), and, in 2014, a new Registrar and a new Director of Academic Services. Following merger in 14-15, we have also been able to benefit from the Institute of Education's expertise in higher education policy and practice as a key influence on our priorities and activities. With this new leadership, our work towards far-reaching change is beginning to bear fruit, as the gradual rise in our satisfaction metrics indicates. We expect the full impact of this change to be

reflected comprehensively in our metrics by 2019-20.

As we shall set out below, this programme of activity has included the introduction of a new and potentially transformative framework for designing programmes in a research-intensive institution, the Connected Curriculum (TQ3); an overhaul of our regulations to facilitate greater flexibility for staff in designing and delivering programmes; and the significant expansion of structures which promote student participation and leadership in all aspects of education development, particularly through ChangeMakers (TQ1). This is against a backdrop of strategic investment in infrastructure and resources, including the prioritisation of funds for teaching and learning spaces within our wider Estates Masterplan (LE1), and a commitment to the development of innovative co-curricular activity, such as our Global Citizenship Programme (LE2), student entrepreneurship and volunteering schemes (SO2). Change on the scale that we envisage requires a long lead-in period; this submission summarises the progress we have made over the last three years.

## Teaching quality

‘Our students will participate in the research process and the creation of knowledge, supported by our academic and research staff. They will understand the ‘edge of knowledge’ and learn how to deal with uncertainty. Through this integrated approach, they will develop their critical independent thinking skills, become confident problem solvers, be well versed in communicating complex information and experienced at working in a team. With these skills, our graduates will excel in the workplace and be highly valued contributors across all walks of life.’ UCL 2034 (institutional strategy).

We are pleased that our high academic standards were recognised by the QAA in our 2016 Higher Education Review. With our student satisfaction metrics in mind, we have prioritised investments in teaching quality over the 13-16 period, with a particular emphasis on embedding research-based education into our current practice. Key achievements for us in that time included the major expansion of student participation in curriculum development and quality assurance activities, and the establishment of clear alignment between institutional mission and the education agenda, as well as the development of a framework for research-based education, the Connected Curriculum (TQ3).

### TQ 1 Teaching provides effective challenge and encourages student engagement

We have undergone a step change in our capacity for, and our commitment to, student participation in policy-making, and in shaping the delivery of our degree programmes. Students now play a major role in setting the education agenda at UCL, and our Education Strategy confirms our commitment to working in partnership with UCL Students’ Union (UCLU). In addition to regular meetings with the head of

the institution, strong working relationships have been established with UCLU’s standing officers, and are renewed annually with the incoming sabbatical team. By 15-16, 16 of UCL’s 20 formal committees had student members. On these committees, 28 ex officio places were filled by sabbatical officers; 19 of the other 24 were also filled by nomination from amongst the student body, including 15 student members to Academic Board, UCL’s equivalent of the Senate.

This commitment to student engagement is further reflected in the measures we have put in place to ensure that the student voice informs not only strategy and policy development, but also quality assurance and curriculum enhancement. The Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs) (OVPEA) has had responsibility for student satisfaction surveys since 2014, and the team has overseen a rise in NSS response rates from 62% in 2013’s NSS to 79% in the 2016 survey (against a sector average of 72% in 2016), rolling out an institution-wide feedback campaign under the ‘You Shape UCL’ banner. This team works closely with a 45-strong network of local departmental liaison officers, who communicate the significance of participation in central surveys, and who act on feedback about local services and support.

The Student Academic Representatives Scheme (StARs) is a key example of our commitment to working in partnership with our students. The scheme is a joint undertaking by the students’ union and the university, and, thanks to the engagement and commitment of officers in UCLU, its reach and influence has grown considerably over the past three years. In 15-16, we recorded 521 undergraduate student representatives across 11 faculties, up from 418 in 13-14. StARs receive a comprehensive induction and are supported by UCLU staff throughout their tenure; they are now appropriately trained

and sufficiently numerous to enable them to canvass opinion effectively, and to represent their peers comprehensively on departmental committees and in other decision-making forums. Since 14-15, StARs have also been full members of all Internal Quality Review panels, with training provided and stipends paid. This has been warmly welcomed by StARs, both as an opportunity for personal development, and as evidence of the value that the university places on their contribution.

StARs also judge the Student Choice Teaching Awards (SCTAs). These are run by UCLU and funded by OVPESA. Participation has grown from 89 individual nominees at launch in 12-13 to 353 nominations in 15-16. This recognises the outstanding individual contribution that many of our teaching staff make to students' learning, and also students' desire to see their teachers' contributions publically acknowledged. The SCTAs share a ceremony with the annual Provost's Teaching Awards, which recognise around 14 members of staff each year for their exceptional contribution to education leadership at UCL.

UCL ChangeMakers is our flagship initiative for student partnership in curriculum enhancement. ChangeMakers devise their own curriculum enhancement projects, or implement department-commissioned projects, receiving up to £1000 project funding to facilitate their efforts. The student leaders of these teams also receive a stipend of £150, in recognition of the time commitment and the value of the work undertaken. Qualitative evaluation indicates that students undertaking the projects become more engaged, responsible and pro-active learners, and develop a stronger sense of belonging. Staff in departments have also acknowledged the value to them of the expertise and enthusiasm of students motivated to help make positive change at UCL. 14-15 was a pilot year for ChangeMakers, with 10 projects funded;

this rose to 52 projects in 15-16. These projects included a departmental education conference (Geography); a trial of Slack networking software to initiate and build a cohort community (Computer Science); writing workshops (English; Anthropology) and the redesign by students of a first-year experiment (Physics). A student-led lecture series has also been established. Three student-partnership projects were presented by their respective student leads to the 15-16 UCL Teaching and Learning Conference. Overall NSS satisfaction scores in 15-16 increased by an average of 2.7% for departments with a ChangeMakers project (against a UCL average increase of 1%). As we continue this scheme into 16-17, we will also monitor this link between student satisfaction and engagement with the ChangeMakers scheme.

Another strand, ChangeMakers Scholars, gives student participants a key role in our work to improve assessment and feedback, with a particular focus on departments with the lowest NSS scores. In 15-16, 13 scholars completed their projects, producing reports, facilitating focus groups and formulating recommendations for action in their assigned departments. Evaluation recorded high confidence amongst scholars that their work would be acted upon, and also of feeling empowered and engaged by their participation. Staff in departments also valued the support from colleagues in CALT, who oversee the ChangeMakers schemes, in facilitating recruitment, induction, training and payment. In this first year of the scheme, undergraduate student satisfaction with assessment and feedback increased by 5.2% on average across the departments that took part, compared with 3% across UCL as a whole. From 17-18, we expect to expand this feature of ChangeMakers, with a project on assessment and feedback in every department and undergraduates working to ensure strong student input into departmental development plans in those disciplines where NSS

scores require most urgent attention, as part of a co-ordinated process of support, review and action planning (ASER Intensive, discussed at TQ4, below).

We have built a strong partnership with UCLU on education and on student support. The sabbatical officers of the Union have asked us to include the following statement in our submission:

“UCLU value our close working relationship with UCL, in which we are able to openly and honestly reflect together on both areas of genuine excellence, and areas we would like to see improve. Through and with UCLU, students contribute as partners to the many ways in which UCL reflects on itself and identifies areas for improvement. Typically with a process such as this submission, we would be eager to contribute in exactly the same way. However, we have felt absolutely unable to, because of the way in which the TEF is designed. Any positive comment from us could contribute to increasing the fees of students who come after us. Any negative comment from us risks real and immediate reputational and financial consequences for our institution. The setup of the Teaching Excellence Framework as currently constituted threatens our ability to work as partners with UCL. This is profoundly sad, and in the longer term will reduce, rather than improve teaching quality.”  
UCLU 16-17 Sabbatical Team

## TQ 2 Recognition and reward for teaching

We have restructured and invested substantially in staffing to expand UCL's capacity for education leadership. Our introduction noted the significant leadership changes within UCL since

2012. This has had major implications for the profile of the education agenda within the institution. We have retained several of the priorities that were established under previous leadership – such as our commitment to education for global citizenship (LE2, below), and our institutional support for student entrepreneurship (SO2, below). However, the depth of our engagement with teaching excellence has undergone a step change. This is exemplified in our refocusing of the central resources with responsibility for education. The team supporting the Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs) has grown from six in 13-14 to twelve in 15-16, expanding capacity for strategic planning, internal communications and the co-ordination of our student engagement activity and our partnership with UCLU. The new leadership in our Centre for Advancing Learning and Teaching has supported the refocusing of the institutional education mission around the Connected Curriculum (as a framework for curriculum design and delivery), UCL Arena (our programme of professional development for staff who teach or support teaching) and UCL ChangeMakers (to facilitate student participation in enhancement), with a significant impact on the reach of CALT and on its capacity to support teaching staff in faculties to effect change. The staffing complement within the team has grown from 14 members to 18 in 15-16, supplemented by an additional 8 staff from UCL faculties contributing regular teaching to the Arena programme. Additionally, new leadership within Academic Services has resulted in a root-and-branch review of regulations in 15-16, and the embedding of a culture of student participation in all aspects of quality assurance. The staffing complement in this area has also grown from 8 to 10. We consider that we now have the capacity at the centre of the organisation to support our faculties and departments to deliver on our institutional commitments on education to staff and students.

We have substantially revised our promotions criteria to ensure we are rewarding leadership in education. In 14-15, the Vice-Provost (Education & Student Affairs) began an institutional review of UCL's promotions criteria, with the specific aim of addressing the question of parity between research and teaching in promotions. A two-year process of consultation, review and realignment of our criteria will conclude with the launch of our new framework in 16-17. These new criteria will incentivise staff to connect their research and their teaching, and will reward staff for the impact that they have in education leadership roles. Following successful completion of probation, UCL has introduced annual appraisal for all staff, with a 95% completion target in all areas. Over the next year, a new academic framework will be introduced to help inform appraisal discussions, including embedding messages in respect of teaching and education expectations at UCL. A UCL-wide review of appraisal processes is also underway, with the aim of implementing a new, improved online appraisal system for all staff in 2018.

The UCL Arena scheme has dramatically refocused professional development support for teaching, and has significantly expanded its reach and impact. The scheme brings together the principles of research-based education (and the Connected Curriculum, our associated framework) with UCL ChangeMakers in a coherent programme of professional development for UCL staff. It has also put the award of a HEA-accredited qualification – the UCL Arena Fellowship – at the heart of our probation process and the CPD and support we offer to established staff. This is a particular success story for us. In 2012-13, around 8% of teaching staff had HEA-accredited Fellowship; within 2 years, by 14-15, this had grown to 15%. Between 13-16, 461 staff and postgraduate teaching assistants

gained accreditation, with numbers of Fellowships awarded rising from 46 in 14-15 to 122 in 15-16, and the number of Senior Fellowships awarded rising from 10 in 14-15 to 31 in 15-16. All of our early-career staff are required to achieve Fellowship as a condition of probation. We are now ahead of the sector average with respect to the rate of growth in awards. The vast majority of applications at every level are successful at their first attempt (93%). More than 60 members of staff are now registered as Fellowship Assessors. In 15-16, the President and Provost gained Principal Arena Fellowship (Professor Michael Arthur PFHEA), followed by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) in 16-17 (Professor Anthony Smith PFHEA). These figures demonstrate our staff's growing engagement with education development and with research-based practice, and also indicate the value that they place on the voluntary award. By the end of 15-16, 3,754 staff were signed up to the UCL Arena mailing list, and UCL Arena events in 15-16 registered a total of 3,530 participants. The average evaluation score for taught sessions and 'Exchange Seminars' was 4.3 out of 5, with 4.8 for the 15-16 UCL Arena application writing lunches.

Staff are also actively encouraged to disseminate examples of good teaching practice, through Exchange Seminars, at our Teaching and Learning conference and through the Teaching and Learning Portal, UCL's hub for information about teaching and learning, which publishes case studies, best practice and toolkits for staff. This resource was revamped and relaunched in 2015, and in its first year, has had almost 170,000 visits and over 330,000 webpage views. Monthly page views have increased by 60% in that year, from just under 23,000 in May 2015 to over 37,000 in May / June 2016.

### TQ 3 Course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills

We have high academic standards and our programmes are recognised as stimulating and challenging. 98% of the 656 responses to our 15-16 survey of external examiners indicated their confidence in the alignment of our standards with PSRB requirements, and 97% confirmed their belief that processes were sound and the standard achieved by our students is in line with national standards for university education in the UK.

We are therefore confident that our taught programmes are robust, challenging and test our high-attaining students' abilities. 88% of students responding to the NSS in 15-16 agreed that their course is intellectually stimulating, 2% above the sector average, and, in a 2015 Student Barometer survey of all undergraduates, with 6000+ respondents, 96% agreed that they were satisfied with the subject area expertise of their lecturers, and 90% were satisfied with the academic content of their course. 89% of our undergraduates achieve a first or 2:1 degree, a figure which has remained consistent across the 13-16 period. Consistently, across this same period, an average of 25% of our undergraduates were enrolled on four-year undergraduate master's programmes, with the associated levels of stretch associated with this delivery mode. The vast majority of eligible undergraduate programmes are accredited by PSRBs where this is available, including for all eligible programmes in Engineering, the School of Pharmacy and Laws.

Connected Curriculum demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that our students experience the 'edge of knowledge' and understand how to deal with uncertainty,

equipping them to apply this understanding in ways that are valuable to their futures, including their careers. Connected Curriculum is a framework for designing and enhancing taught programmes of study. Its core pedagogic principle is that students' learning should be characterised by research and active, critical enquiry. The ways in which these active learning approaches are embedded in the curriculum vary according to discipline, just as research varies in disciplines. However, we are taking strategic steps to ensure that by 2021, all undergraduate students will be connecting actively with researchers, participating in enquiry and presenting their 'outputs', in multiple forms, to targeted 'real world' audiences. Through collaborative enquiry, they are being explicitly prepared for the workplace, as well as understanding how new knowledge is created.

Recurrent funding of £200k per annum was allocated in 14-15 for the infrastructure to support the roll-out of the Connected Curriculum. Work in that year focused on raising awareness amongst colleagues of the new initiative and its potential. Ten staff from across the institution were seconded to CALT to gather information about current programme structures and conceptions of research in different subject areas. Case studies gathered through this exercise were disseminated through the teaching and learning portal and through well-attended events. Two senior members of staff were then recruited to begin further development, and Connected Curriculum was formally launched at the 2015 Teaching and Learning conference. In 15-16, Connected Curriculum secondments were refreshed, and further awareness raising undertaken. In collaboration with colleagues in Digital Education, a curriculum development tool ('ABC – Arena Blended Connected') was produced and trialled on over 75 modules by August 2016, together with a programme development guide. More than 80 programme

leaders attended UCL Arena workshops, and the initiative has additionally been fully integrated into the Arena programmes for PGTAs and probationary lecturers. A Connected Curriculum governance structure was also established, with six of eight working or development groups including student members.

All our quality assurance processes have been shaped to support actions and interventions from CALT to embed the Connected Curriculum in our degree programmes and to benchmark departmental progress towards the implementation of the Connected Curriculum. In disciplines which have shown early engagement, the impact of their commitment to its principles is reflected in NSS scores: Archaeology, for example, can point to student satisfaction with teaching at 96% in 15-16 (98% overall). We consider Connected Curriculum establishes UCL as a forward-thinking institution, demonstrating how we use our world-leading research to inform excellent curricula fit for the contemporary era. To improve radically the quality of provision across a large, diverse institution is no quick and easy task; however, we have set up structures, quality processes and networks that draw on our institutional strengths and which will underpin the improvement of our satisfaction metrics in future.

#### **TQ 4 Assessment and feedback are used in supporting students' development, progression and attainment**

Feedback is a particular challenge and we are not yet consistently meeting student expectations across the institution. We were encouraged to see that every question in the NSS relating to

assessment and feedback saw an increase in the NSS 2016. In particular, the score for question 5 on marking criteria rose from 63% last year to 66% this year, and question 9 ('Feedback on my work helped me clarify things I did not understand') rose 4% to 60% this year compared with NSS 2015. 4% more students this year agreed that they had received detailed comments on their work. This was a direct result of the steps we have taken to bring about long-term improvements. With the introduction of the Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) process in 15-16, we mandated every department to take specific, tangible actions in relation to assessment and feedback, with faculty teaching committees monitoring the implementation of the related action plans. Departments with particularly low satisfaction scores have also participated in the ASER Intensive process, with targeted support, guidance and monitoring of their action plans to deliver sustained improvement in student satisfaction, including input from dedicated student ChangeMaker Scholars (TQ 1, above). Six of the nine 15-16 ASER Intensive departments saw significant improvements in their NSS scores, and overall satisfaction in these departments rose by 8% on average. Three of these departments saw their overall satisfaction scores rise by over 15%, and several saw increases in their teaching, assessment and feedback, and academic support scores by over 10%.

We have also introduced the My Feedback tool into our Virtual Learning Environment, Moodle, to enable students to view their online assessment feedback easily. This was piloted with 850 students in 14-15 and rolled out to all students in 16-17. The system has had 59,000 unique page views since its launch in October 2016, and 14% of all staff and students have already used it. Student feedback on the tool suggests that, in the long-term, it has the potential to change the

culture of how students access and understand their feedback and provisional marks.

These actions set us on the right road, but they are not sufficient to bring about the scale of improvement we are seeking, and so, through the development of the Education Strategy 2016-21, we also identified the need for a major Assessment Review process, launched in 15-16, which will support departmental staff to review assessment practices and fund work at programme level to address specific feedback challenges.

## Learning environment:

*“The primary determinant of a truly exceptional student experience is the quality of the interaction between academic staff and students. It is supported by library and learning resources, IT support, student services, residential accommodation and the estate.”*

### UCL 2034 institutional strategy

We are making significant and long-term investment in our physical infrastructure and in the academic and pastoral support that plays a crucial role in facilitating student success. Our Connected Curriculum framework has the potential to transform our thinking about how education is made meaningful for specific sub-groups of students, and the Liberating the Curriculum strand of the Connected Curriculum (LE 3), on which staff and students are collaborating to identify how we move beyond the traditional white, western curriculum, is important in this context. However, our student satisfaction metrics for academic support indicate that there is more to do, particularly for our mature and our BME students, and so our first priority has been to initiate an overhaul of our personal tutoring system. This was approved by Education Committee in 15-16 and is now being implemented.

Nevertheless, we consider that our continuation rates are strong – stronger, even, than the metrics indicate. UCL’s former policy on re-sits, in operation until 2016, was unusual within the sector. Historically, we have required undergraduates to wait a full year to be reassessed; an unacceptable delay from our students’ point of view. We therefore piloted the introduction of late summer assessment in summer 15-16, and will be extending that pilot further for 16-17. We intend to make late-

summer assessment available across all programmes for the 2017-18 session. Our analysis indicates that we are one of only a very small number of high-entry-tariff institutions in the UK to operate such a policy, and therefore our benchmark will have been heavily influenced by institutions where late-summer assessment is currently available to all students. We currently report any student who has to take a year out in order to re-sit as ‘inactive’, and this is counted as non-continuation. However, of students matriculating in 2012-13 (TEF Y2), 17 of 88 were reported as ‘non-continuing’ when there were actually waiting for the opportunity to re-sit. In 2013/14 (TEF Y3), this was the case for 22 of 106 students. Overall, therefore, we suggest that the number of students who successfully complete their studies is higher than our metrics indicate, and we would argue that an assessment of our support for our students should be re-evaluated against this context.

### LE 1 Physical and digital resources effectively aid students’ learning

We maximise opportunities arising from our central London location, and have been deploying our infrastructure budget strategically to prioritise investment in a high-quality student learning experience. UCL students benefit from our central London location, with access to the British Library and to Senate House Library, as well as the British Museum and other significant cultural and intellectual resources. We enjoy close proximity to the city of London and the access to employers and internship and placement opportunities that this brings. Students also benefit from our co-location, in Bloomsbury, alongside a number of other universities, within an informal ‘university quarter’, with

the facilities and atmosphere that this implies.

That central London location can also pose a logistical challenge for us: we have limited physical space in which to expand, and our undergraduate student numbers have grown by around 14% in the past three years, from 15,640 in 13-14 to 17,846 in 15-16 (including affiliate students). Nevertheless, we have made the provision of teaching and learning spaces a major priority in our long-term strategic Estates capital programme. Over the 13-16 period we allocated £51m towards the redevelopment of our teaching estate and spaces which contribute significantly to the quality of the student experience. A further £77m of improvements will be delivered in 16-17, including major redevelopment and expansion of our refectory and student social spaces. In 13-14 we allocated the last undeveloped area of land on our campus to house a major new Student Centre at a cost of £67m, which will combine direct student access to registry and support services with 1,000 new learning spaces. Ground was broken in 15-16 and we expect to open in 18-19. Consultation with students has been key throughout and sabbatical officers are full members of the Project Board. In 14-15 we opened three significant student learning hubs (at a cost of £8m), and acquired space in Senate House to provide an additional 144 learning spaces. We have increased I&E spend on teaching spaces through a dedicated improvement programme by £1m p.a. from 15-16, and we also invested in innovative learning spaces, such as our Institute of Making, which opened in 2013, with undergraduate member numbers growing from 802 in 13-14 to 1,726 in 15-16.

We also recognise the importance of a

comfortable and safe living environment to students’ academic success. In 15-16, we established a Task & Finish Group to address student concerns about halls accommodation, including the perceived lack of a sense of community. With new senior leadership in this area, a rapid-response turnaround programme has already had major impact; our latest arrival survey indicates that 94% were satisfied with their overall experience of arrival at UCL, significantly higher than the 87% reported in 15-16. 92% agreed that they felt welcome and part of the UCL community, and 92% agreed that moving into student accommodation had been well-organised and straightforward.

We have made significant investment in the development and expansion of our IT infrastructure. We take an inclusive approach to digital education support, which encompasses e-learning services as well as support for the broader student digital experience (WiFi, student computers, classroom technology and educational media provision). Capital investment in digital education has grown from £1.9m p.a. in 13-14 to over £3m p.a. from 15-16. This core funding has been supplemented with an additional £3m in FY 15-16 and £5m in FY 16-17 to accelerate improvements as a direct response to student feedback.

For e-learning, we focus on offering a small number of very large services, and ensuring that they are robust, reliable and well-supported. This has been a deliberate, strategic decision to ensure that we can scale and sustain each of the services we invest in. Use of the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has nearly doubled since 2010, with c. 7m sessions in 13-14, 8.5m in 14-15 and 10.7m in

15-16. We have also had considerable success with our lecture capture service (Lecturecast). In 13-14 the service made 2,640 recordings, with c. 160,000 views; by 15-16, we recorded 2,798 events, but the number of views more than quadrupled to over 650,000. The popularity the service enjoys with students has led to a strategic commitment to expand this still further by making lecture capture 'opt-out' by 18-19, and to expand coverage to large-scale seminar rooms.

Our strategic investment in Library Services reflects our commitment to facilitating research-based education for our undergraduate cohort across our 19 libraries. SCOUNL benchmarking demonstrates the scale of our investment in information provision against comparable universities, ensuring that students have access to excellent resources to support their learning and research. We deliberately invest heavily in information resources, with a spend of £9,907,992 in 15-16 (more than any of the other 121 UK institutions), and have particular expertise in digital resources. Our Reading Lists@UCL initiative to make all course readings available online has gathered momentum over the last two years, and we now have 57% coverage of all modules (around 2,705 active online reading lists). Expansion of this provision was given strategic priority in 2014 in response to direct student feedback. The 28-strong team of subject liaison librarians and site library staff provide support to students with the development of research skills, including well-attended induction sessions and information skills sessions offered to undergraduates through departments. The 2016 'New to UCL' survey indicates that 96% of respondents successfully used a library at UCL in their first few weeks of study. The provision of learning spaces for students in library accommodation is also a key priority for

us, and we have invested heavily in the quality of these spaces over 13-16. 3,864 study spaces were available to students in 15-16, and all learning spaces have now been refurbished (where necessary) and equipped with full access to data points and WIFI, at a cost of over £1.2m. As in other areas, our priorities for investment are determined with significant student input; our move to 24-hour opening in 2015 in all major libraries on campus was a direct response to student feedback, and we have invested substantially in self-service provision in all UCL libraries to ensure students can access resources outside of core hours. As a consequence, the percentage of self-service book loans has risen from 24% in 13-14 to 77% currently. Student satisfaction with the library has remained consistently high over the TEF period at 88%. The quality of library provision at UCL is also indicated by growing figures and positioning for the number of annual visits to the Library. In 14-15, UCL was the 6th most visited Library in the UK and Ireland, with 2.3m visits. After a period of growth (including merger) the 15-16 figure stood at just over 3m – the second highest of the 126 university libraries surveyed in the UK and Ireland.

UCL Culture makes a distinctive contribution to the learning experience of our undergraduates, making our four public museums and fifteen additional collections available to students, and operating the Bloomsbury Theatre and the Public Engagement Unit. In 15-16, 11,823 students (approx. 85% undergraduate) participated in object-based learning activities in 141 modules within their taught programmes. These figures are up 79% on 13-14 (96 modules and 6,608 students). A recent survey of over 400 undergraduate students across 20 UCL modules has demonstrated that collections-

based work and object-based learning (OBL) helps students to increase their knowledge by between 25 and 75% over the course of just one handling session. Moreover, 62% of the students surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that OBL is a more effective way of learning than listening to a talk or lecture. Around 100 volunteering opportunities and placements within the museums were open to undergraduates, totalling 5,820 volunteer hours. Students also have access to a professional theatre – the Bloomsbury – which dedicates 9 weeks each year to student performances. In 13-14 and 14-15, around 950 students each year were involved in acting, producing and teaching activities, contributing to 25 student performances in 13-14 and 28 in 14-15. The theatre is currently being extensively refurbished at a cost of £19.7m and will reopen in 18-19. Further evidence of the reach and impact of the Connected Curriculum can be found in the 15-16 decision to refocus the remit of our Public Engagement Unit to support the public dissemination of undergraduate research, in addition to that of our postgraduates and staff, with access to funding through the Step Out grant scheme.

We have maintained high academic standards during a period of considerable change. In 14-15, UCL merged with the Institute of Education, an almost exclusively postgraduate institution with 6,347 students and 774 staff (FTE). The process of merging a highly specialist postgraduate institute into a comprehensive and multi-faculty university required a substantial investment of time by staff in Registry, Library Services and other professional services teams. Against this backdrop, we are pleased that we have been able to carry out the reform of our academic systems and processes, including a revised annual monitoring process (introduced 15-16)

and a comprehensive review of our assessment regulations (initiated 15-16), and plan to redouble our focus on the quality of the student experience as resource dedicated to merger has been freed up. We are now drawing on the expertise of staff within the IOE, not only on higher education policy and delivery, but also in terms of understanding the secondary landscape, and adapting our teaching and student support accordingly. Merger was also achieved without detriment to the student experience: students from the Institute of Education continue to report high levels of satisfaction which reflects the smooth transition undertaken during the merger; 91% of Institute of Education students reported being satisfied with the overall experience of their course in the 2016 NSS, and 88% of these students also agreed that their courses were well organised and running smoothly.

### **LE 2 Environment is enriched by student exposure to and involvement in provision at forefront of scholarship, research and/or professional practice**

Students benefit from the strength of our research profile, and from regular contact with academic staff with international research reputations. In April 2016, UCL employed 3,560 staff in academic and teaching fellow roles. This represents a considerable investment in academic expertise which can support our research-based education agenda. We submitted 91% of our eligible staff to REF 2014 (83% of whom were staff on contracts with teaching commitments) and in 2016 we recorded 1101 professors on staff. Our undergraduate students are therefore members of a learning community of active, influential scholars who are working at the leading edge of knowledge.

We have outlined (TQ3) how the Connected



Curriculum will support our staff to teach students about the the applications of research and the challenges of creating new knowledge. Our Global Citizenship Programme (GCP) demonstrates how our approach to research-based education can be expanded into extra-curricular, cross-disciplinary activity for undergraduate students, focusing on how research and researchers can contribute to the resolution of the world's problems through collaboration. This flagship initiative takes place in the last two weeks of the academic year, following the completion of undergraduate assessments. Open to all first and second-year students, the programme's six academic strands bring undergraduates together in inter-disciplinary groups to develop collective projects, prepare their research for external audiences, produce innovative outputs (film-making, drawing, visualisation) and to experiment with the potential of learning and broadening their thinking beyond their taught programme. Feedback from participants is consistently positive. In 15-16, 94% of students found the programme stimulating, and 89% would recommend it to others. Evaluative comments confirm that students appreciate the opportunity to work in mixed-discipline groups, as well as the freedom to experiment in a non-assessed environment. Participation has increased considerably since its inception in 2012, from 415 undergraduates in 13-14 to 583 in 15-16. The team is aiming to work with 1000 students (including postgraduates) in 16-17. We have provided consultancy and advice to other institutions considering similar programmes, and the Academic Director was invited in 2016 to speak at the UNESCO conference on Global Citizenship Education in Seoul, South Korea.

**LE 3 Students' academic experiences are tailored to the individual, maximising rates**

**of retention, attainment and progression**

Our Education Strategy has personalised learning as the first of its objectives, highlighting our recognition of the importance of meeting the needs of students as individuals, and of fostering a sense of community and belonging. Our flagship initiative is our Transition Programme for all first-year undergraduate students, now in its eleventh year. Every department has a specially tailored version of the scheme, which it runs locally with central support. Each first year is assigned a Transition Mentor (a later-year student from their department) who works with them on a weekly basis in the first term to help them orient themselves within London, UCL and their academic discipline. Social mentoring is a priority in the initial weeks, with peer-assisted learning introduced once mentees are ready. Over 13-16, consistent across all three years, around 80% of first year undergraduate students attended at least five mentoring sessions. In 15-16, 88% of mentees reported that they felt the scheme helped their transition to UCL; 92% felt it helped them understand what to expect of UCL and their department.

Two spin-off programmes from the Transitions Programme have been developed, with the first running in 15-16, and the second in 16-17. The Being@UCL scheme is targeted at students from under-represented backgrounds, to help them maximise the academic and personal benefits of their time at UCL. 85% of the participants in the small-group workshops run by Student Psychological Services reported that they had learnt new coping strategies; 69% felt more likely to continue at UCL, and 67% felt more confident about studying at UCL. We have also invested in support for students with autistic spectrum disorders, with a dedicated

strand of our Transitions programme resulting in reported 100% retention amongst participants in 15-16. We note the indications in our TEF metrics that our widening participation cohort are generally more satisfied than their peers with the teaching they receive (with a difference from benchmark of -0.5 for disadvantaged, against -2.2 for non-disadvantaged), highlighting the impact of the support we have put in place for this group. We will now be investing in a student-devised 'Belonging' programme for 16-17.

We have refocused and reprioritised our support for students with specific needs, bringing expertise in-house wherever possible to deliver the best support we can. Following the abolition of the Disabled Student's Allowance in 14-15, we outsourced dyslexia assessments (which UCL funds for all applicants) to improve turnaround times, and refocused the UCL dyslexia support team's work on the delivery of 1:1 support sessions (to 78 students in 15-16) and mentoring (to 130 students). Termly disability awareness training sessions are delivered for staff as part of the UCL Arena programme. We have prioritised investment in mental health support, with the introduction in 13-14 of medical advisers (trained psychiatrists from community practice) who supplement the expertise of UCL's own mental health team. We believe we were the first university to introduce a telephone support service (in 14-15), investing £50k per annum in ensuring that students have 24-hour access to BACP-accredited counsellors for triage and initial support. In common with all other education and student support activities, we have worked closely and collaboratively with UCLU and individual students to identify and develop service improvements. Student focus groups are used to determine priorities for funding, and in

15-16, funding was secured to employ four graduate interns to develop a newsfeed and blog to help new students adapt to university. Further internships have been secured for 16-17. Ten student disability ambassadors were also recruited in 15-16 to provide 1:1 peer support and produce video resources to improve the disability declaration rate. Our students with specific learning difficulties report higher levels of satisfaction with the advice and support they receive with their studies (79% compared to 72% for students with no disability) and with the advice available when making study choices (77% compared to 71% amongst those without disabilities).

Our commitment to supporting the cultural, geographical, racial and sexual diversity of our student body, in line with our traditions of inclusivity and diversity, has been widely recognised. We were the first university to admit women on equal terms with men, and to admit students regardless of race or background. We continue to prioritise work to respond to the inclusivity challenges of the 21st century. In 2014, we became the first university to join the Stonewall Global Diversity Champions network, and we are currently the only university to hold both an Athena Swan Silver award (2016), and a Bronze Race Equality Charter Mark (2016), recognising major programmes of institutional action on equality and diversity challenges. Our Liberating the Curriculum (LTC) initiative translates this commitment into curriculum development activity. Following the high-profile 'Why isn't my professor black?' debate event, chaired by the Provost, and attended by 350 staff and students, the LTC strand of Connected Curriculum was established and initiated a number of staff-student collaborative projects, ranging from work on diversifying

reading lists, bringing patients' perspectives into healthcare and a co-curriculum project on the 'other' in film. A series of alumni films around the theme of identity and belonging were also produced and disseminated. In 15-16, a BME attainment summit brought together staff and students to produce an action plan specifically focused on projects to raise attainment and improve belonging amongst these groups. That plan will be implemented from 16-17. Finally, we are working closely with UCLU on zero tolerance for sexual harassment campaigns and on the expansion of mental health support services for students.

## Student outcomes and learning gains

*"...we will ensure that our students are well-prepared for future career success in a global economy and for a lifetime of intellectual and personal development through further academic study, research and life learning courses."*

### UCL Education Strategy 2016-21

#### SO 1 Students achieve their educational and professional goals, in particular progression to further study or highly skilled employment

UCL has a strong Careers Service which has an excellent track record of success in supporting students into employment and further study, as our metrics confirm.

Every department at UCL has a dedicated careers consultant who devises a bespoke programme, and works with academic staff to review information from DLHE and develop plans. In 2013, UCL Careers won the 'Academic Partnership Award' from the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), for the best careers service with initiatives supporting academic departments. We are also piloting a 'Student Careers Rep' system, with students working to provide feedback on the departmental programme.

In 15-16, 5,469 undergraduates used the My UCL Careers portal, and 2,213 individuals had some form of short 1:1 appointment with a centrally-based careers consultant. This compares to 1,553 undergraduates supported centrally in 13-14. 629 appointments were delivered within academic departments by careers consultants in 15-16. 1,565

undergraduate students attended at least one centrally booked workshop or other careers event (excluding careers fairs) in 2015/16, compared to 1,392 in 14-15 and 1,303 in 13-14. In addition, 13,644 attendees were recorded in total at workshops delivered by careers consultants within academic departments (up from 8,769 in 13-14). The UCL Careers Service also engaged with 425 unique employers in 15-16.

As elsewhere, student engagement is key to the design and management of our careers provision. The Skills4Work programme has been developed and is run in collaboration with UCLU, offering workshops, panel discussions and mock assessment centres for students preparing for highly skilled graduate jobs and internships applications. The programme enjoys the support of over 65 graduate recruiters, with over 85 activities taking place annually. The number of individual undergraduates taking part in the skills activities numbered 332 in 15-16, compared to 273 in 13-14. We have developed a Careers in Academia online resource to support those who are considering a research career, including video interviews with current PhD students and advice from academics from a range of disciplines.

Careers Fairs are an important element of our provision, and cover a number of larger sectors, attracting 250 employers and 4,500 students across the whole programme. We actively encourage SMEs and charity organisations offering appropriate roles to attend through discounted places, ensuring that we have a good diversity of employers at the fairs, in line with student feedback. In 2016, a new fair was added to our portfolio: Health & Life Sciences,

a collaborative venture between UCL, Kings and Imperial, hosted at the new Frances Crick Institute. This had 32 exhibiting organisations and attracted 870 students (330 of whom were from UCL). We run careers consultant-led lunchtime seminars prior to the events, giving tips on how to network with the employers, appropriate prior research and questions to consider to help students make the most of their time at the fairs. The events are popular, with an average attendance of 85 students per workshop, and employer feedback indicates they consider our students are well-prepared. We also host around 40 individual employer presentations annually, and promote a similar number off-campus, in order that interested students can hear directly about graduate and internship roles in more depth as well as information about deadlines and how to make successful applications to such highly skilled roles.

Our Themed Weeks cover sectors popular with students where the routes in are more diverse and often rely on the students to network and proactively search for opportunities. The roles are all nonetheless highly skilled. These weeks cover Museums & Cultural Heritage, Government & Policy, Media, Charities & NGOs, Environment, and Life & Health Science. They blend panel discussions, insight sessions, workshops and networking events to get students engaging with practitioners in each sector, including UCL alumni, industry experts and recruiters. The programme attracted 1,500 students last year.

We keep our provision under continual review to ensure it is meeting students' needs, and work closely with UCLU to develop new initiatives. UCL Careers surveys graduate recruiters who engage with our on-campus

careers events programme. Employers are asked for data on hiring figures from UCL as well as information about where our students fall down in the recruitment process. This survey enables us to shape our programme and emphasise where more support for students is required. Student feedback is also collected from every one-to-one appointment and anonymised before it is shared with consultants and their line managers. Service improvement measures are shared with students on the UCL Careers website. In 2015, we also undertook research to consider whether certain groups of students were under-performing compared to their peers, looking particularly at widening participation categories as well as BME students. The results were analysed by faculty and provided a baseline for action planning and the development of a careers registration process, so that students who needed additional careers support could be identified early, appropriate interventional support given and progress tracked more closely.

We are now implementing the systems we will need to monitor employability learning gain more comprehensively. We have recently piloted the careers registration process prior to fully integrating it within our enrolment system from September 2017. The project will enable us to identify all students who are not on track for gaining highly skilled work or further study on course completion. This will enable us to support students from widening participation backgrounds without inappropriately labelling them. We have also been piloting the use of 'careers coaches' with students who do not secure satisfactory employment immediately following graduation. Outreach calling was used to identify 'at-risk' departments and of the 6 to 8 departments identified, 1:1 coaching and signposting to relevant events/ opportunities resulted in 97

undergraduate students engaging over a two-year period. The results of such interventions, alongside peer support via LinkedIn, saw unemployment rates decrease by an average of 5.1% and 9.5% within the targeted departments (2014 and 2013 respectively).

### **SO 2 Students acquire knowledge, skills and attributes that are valued by employers and that enhance their personal and/or professional lives**

We are committed to supporting student enterprise, both to provide opportunities to current students and to increase the employability of UCL graduates. Following the appointment of Dr Celia Caulcott as Vice-Provost (Enterprise and London) in 2015, our enterprise offer has been refined. We have reallocated resources and aim to increase the business advice resources available and the number of students reached by our training. Enterprise support for students includes 1:1 advice, a free 'hatchery' space and guest lectures. We also run an annual Enterprise Boot Camp, a three-day event which provides a foundation in the fundamentals of business. Attendance at this event has increased from 138 in 13-14 to 300 in 15-16. The number of supported student and graduate start-ups has also steadily increased over the last three years, from 40 in 13-14 to 45 in 14-15 and 51 in 15-16. These figures cannot be broken down by level, as undergraduate and postgraduate students are encouraged to collaborate. The total turnover of these start-ups in 15-16 was £12.2m, and 77% of all start-ups initiated are still in existence.

UCL's flagship Global Citizenship Programme

also incorporates strong employability and enterprise strands. The employability programme offers access to workshops, training, talks, panel events, networking opportunities and 1:1 coaching, as well as dedicated careers support. Students on the volunteering strand run projects at voluntary sector organisations, and an entrepreneurship boot-camp focuses on developing 'social entrepreneurship start-ups'. Participants develop hard and soft skills including negotiating, presenting, and problem-solving. External consultants and experts contribute to the programme, and all participants have the opportunity to work with external stakeholders within their pathway. 73 undergraduate students completed the enterprise bootcamp in 15-16 (up from 51 in 13-14), with 85 completing the volunteering strand (up from 74 in 13-14).

Our Volunteering Services Unit also works across the university to support students to develop transferable skills through community work. They fund projects which are designed and implemented by students (typically around 70 per year), develop discipline-specific volunteering activities and broker placements for students in more than 250 community and voluntary organisations across London annually. In 2013, they recruited 1,700 students who committed a total of 41,500 hours to voluntary activity; this had grown by 2015 to a cohort of 2,000 students, committing 53,485 hours of their time.

### **SO 3 Positive outcomes are achieved by its students from all backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes**

We are actively developing methodologies to monitor trends in student performance by group. Data for 15-16 indicate that there is only a small attainment gap at institutional level between students from POLAR 1-2 backgrounds and students from POLAR 3-5. 57% of students in both categories achieved a 2:1 degree (although POLAR 3-5 students are 6% more likely to achieve a first). Women were also more likely than men to achieve a 2:1 degree (58% / 51%). However, we are aware of an attainment gap between BME and white students for final awards; in 15-16, 5% fewer got firsts and 14% got 2:2s or thirds, compared with 7% for white students, although fewer BME students got thirds. Our average student attainment data for the same year provides early indications that this may be changing, however: first and second-year BME students in 15-16 achieved 4% more first class marks than their white peers.

We are committed to redressing any disparities, and in 15-16 we made consideration of student attainment data by ethnicity, POLAR quintile and gender a core element of our ASER monitoring process, which highlights to departments where they differ from the UCL average. They then record any appropriate action in their development and enhancement plans, which are monitored by the relevant faculty. This evaluative approach to student outcomes will be developed in future ASER rounds. We have also joined a collaborative bid with Kingston University and others to HEFCE for funding to implement a data tool to evaluate 'value-added' against degree outcomes data, drawing on data about entry tariffs and outcomes sector-wide. If successful, work in this area will begin in February 2017. Data analysis will be supplemented with an expansion of the Liberating the Curriculum project into programme-level workshops for

staff to enable them to adapt their teaching practices and curriculum content to respond to any identified challenges for particular groups. We are also a partner in a HEFCE-funded Learning Gain consortium project, led by the University of Cambridge, which tracks students in four disciplines to determine the cognitive learning gain associated with their programme of study. We will develop further interventions to respond to their findings from 16-17 onward.

## Conclusion

As an institution, we have a strong track record of supporting our high-achieving undergraduates through to completion. We endeavour to develop their research and communication abilities so that they graduate with good degrees, and we advise and mentor them through to highly skilled employment. They have told us that there is more that we need to do, however, particularly on assessment and feedback. We have taken this very seriously. Our priority now is to respond strategically and with urgency to their concerns.

In 13-14, we embarked on a programme of major educational change, involving new leadership; a radical new framework for curriculum development and assessment; staffing expansion and a new approach to training and development. We also accelerated investment in services and facilities and reinvested in our working relationship with UCLU to make our students full partners in all our activity. Education is now firmly at the heart of UCL's institutional mission, and the steps we have taken to identify and mitigate our immediate challenges will be reinforced over the coming years as the longer-term impact of our cumulative efforts becomes clear.

Our work over the past three years has begun to be reflected both in engagement levels and satisfaction scores, and one final metric illustrates the momentum we are gathering. In 13-14, 80 staff members registered for the institutional Teaching and Learning conference; that same event in 15-16 attracted over 800 participants, including student presenters and delegates, and the #UCLTL hashtag trended 4th highest in London during the day – no mean feat for an internal

education event. Such rapid growth in engagement, enthusiasm and participation indicates that we have the capacity and the will to undertake the work that undoubtedly remains to be done – but we look forward to the point in the near future where our metrics and our narrative submission both point clearly and unambiguously to the same evidence of our success.