

**Eugenics Legacy Education Project**

Eugenics Legacy Education Network (ELEN): Accountable Space Policy

*Version 1.1 - 21.02.24*

Please note that this is a working document, and we will be working with colleagues across UCL asking them for feedback and discussion around this policy throughout the project. The policy has been developed from the [BARC Principled Space Policy](https://barcworkshop.org/resources/principled-space/). Thank you to Dr Toyin Agbetu, Leo Havermann, Abbie King, and Dr Manjula Patrick for sharing their expertise and ideas in exploring the concept of an accountable space for our network.  ​

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​About ELEN

The [Eugenics Legacy Education Project (ELEP)](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/professional-development/eugenics-legacy-education-project-elep-0) runs from 2022-2025 and is carrying out a range of activities designed to support staff and students at UCL to engage with UCL’s historic links to eugenics and the contemporary implications for education activities. This means working together to think about how a critical engagement with eugenics might be incorporated into teaching and learning activities in a way that is congruent and attends to recommendations outlined in [UCL’s Eugenics Inquiry Response report.](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/provost/inquiry-history-eugenics-ucl/reports-and-recommendations)

The role of the [Eugenics Legacy Education Network (ELEN)](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=_oivH5ipW0yTySEKEdmlwsI-he9Fl8BBpBsK3D1ZZKZURFNDWVo4SjVSWE9aSEk5S0lMR0dDN09TQS4u) within ELEP is to explore the educational implications of UCL’s eugenics legacy. The Network aims to explore the dynamics of UCL’s history of eugenics, teaching difficult knowledge in higher educational contexts, and providing a space to:

* Map current pedagogic research in the field of difficult knowledge – such as eugenics histories and legacies.
* Link professional practice to current theories and thinking the teaching of complex, controversial and/or contentious curriculum areas.
* Support debate and critical thinking around teaching and learning scholarship.
* Foster solidarity between academics, community members, and educational professionals on issues of social justice, pedagogies of care, and reparative futures in education.
* Deliver a programme of regular events throughout the academic year to foreground issues related to education as a practice of social justice.

# What is an accountable space?

Given that the starting point for this network is a scholarly engagement with educational injustices and critical engagement with historical links to eugenics, it is of vital importance that harm is not done to those taking part in ELEN’s activities. Drawing on [Elise Ahenkorah’s work](https://medium.com/@elise.k.ahen/safe-and-brave-spaces-dont-work-and-what-you-can-do-instead-f265aa339aff), we understand an accountable space to be one where discussion, debate, and learning happens in a space where there is a responsibility to link this thinking to tangible change and transformation. It means that every individual working within the network commits to thinking about how they can enact and support change in their own contexts, but also within our wider UCL community. As Ahenkorah explains, accountable spaces *‘...place an equal amount of onus for all to behave equitably and inclusively, to foster a deeper understanding of diverse lived experiences in real-time.’*

Reading about, talking about, and reflecting on historical harms in education contexts and the contemporary implications of continuing educational injustices is difficult. While considering issues of respect, dignity, discomfort, and challenge in relation to educational theory and practice, we will also need to consider these aspects in relation to our own practices and behaviour. This policy is designed to outline some general principles around ELEN’s activities and to support learning and challenge that is respectful and productive. We also hold in tension that this will also constitute an important opportunity for learning about mistake making in education and acknowledging our discomfort as we work together.

# ELEN’s key principles

* All communication, be it online or in person, will be appropriate for a professional and academic audience and be considerate of people from different cultural backgrounds. An inclusive language guide is being developed focusing on using language that fosters inclusion, respect, and learning together.
* ELEN will actively seek diverse perspectives and ensure a range of voices are heard and included in event planning, discussions, and decision-making processes.
* Convenors/presenters will be supported to lead discussions in ways that are inclusive, can hold challenge, and support discussion effectively through ELEN’s preparation activities.
* Where experiences (either personal or professional) are shared they may be deeply personal and should be treated in the strictest confidence.
* By taking part in ELEN’s activities and events, we will believe people’s accounts of their experiences of marginalisation by not disputing their lived experience. Questions designed to learn/further understanding may be appropriate, provided they are respectful and not overly intrusive.
* We ask ELEN members to make efforts to be aware of our privilege(s) and respond constructively to opportunities to learn more about our privilege(s) if we are challenged. If our privilege is pointed out or acknowledged by others, we commit to taking the time to reflect and respond constructively rather than denying or defending our position. Open conversations lead to greater understanding.
* We will actively promote education and self-reflection to identify and challenge assumptions or prejudices that may inadvertently affect their interactions or perceptions of others. This might be through ELEN events or wider UCL events that explore concepts like unconscious bias, anti-racist practice, and inclusive education.
* We will work actively to emphasise the importance of continuous learning and growth by encouraging members to engage in ongoing education, training, or discussions related to privilege, inclusivity, and diversity. This will demonstrate our commitment to personal and collective growth and creates opportunities for open and constructive conversations.
* We will ensure that the use of social media is agreed and clear for the events we hold. For some events it will never be appropriate to share information on social media, however, if sharing experiences on social media, we will respect other participants. For example, we will not make derogatory comments or posts about any person in the discussion or share experiences that are not ours without explicit consent.
* Harassment and exclusionary jokes will never be appropriate at ELEN events (please see Glossary below for our definition of harassment).
* At UCL, bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct are unacceptable. If you experience harassment or negative behaviours because of ELEN events or activities, please contact Helen Knowler (ELEN convenor) to discuss your concerns in confidence ([h.knowler@ucl.ac.uk).](mailto:h.knowler@ucl.ac.uk).%E2%80%AF) You can report incidents of harassment or inappropriate behaviour using UCL’s [Report and Support](https://report-support.ucl.ac.uk/) tool. You can report [anonymously](https://report-support.ucl.ac.uk/report/anonymous) or including your [contact details](https://report-support.ucl.ac.uk/report/advisor) and talking to an advisor.

# Glossary

* Privilege: when we refer to ‘privilege’ in the context of this policy, we are specifically discussing the concept of ‘identity privilege’, which is any unearned benefit or advantage or lack of disadvantage one receives or experiences in society by nature of their identity.
* Marginalised: this term (and variations thereof) is used by this policy to refer to people or groups of people who are not well represented or included in society or the spaces we typically operate in. We use this term instead of minoritised as it is sometimes the case that marginalised people are not in the mathematical minority.
* Oppression(s): this term refers to the experience of unjust treatment experienced by many marginalised people/groups.
* Lived experience: is personal knowledge about the world that is gained through first-hand involvement in everyday events.
* Harassment: offensive verbal comments and/or imagery related to gender, gender reassignment, gender identity and expression, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sex, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion, or belief, and/or technology choices. Other examples of harassment include sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, sustained disruption of talks or other events, and inappropriate physical contact. All examples of harassment are equally important.