

## UCL East Museums and Schools Programme Report 2020-2021

At the end of the fourth year of this ambitious programme, UCL academics, students and UCL Culture collaborated to create popular online engagements with schools in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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# UCL East Museums and Schools and Programme Report 2020-21

## UCL Culture Schools Engagement

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The Access and Participation Plan identifies students with low household incomes and from low participation neighbourhoods as underrepresented at UCL. The ratio of students from the lowest participation neighbourhoods to the highest is 1:13. The ratio between students from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and their peers is 1:4. While students from ethnic minorities overall are well-represented among UCL UK undergraduates (students from BAME backgrounds make up 50% of the intake), this masks underrepresentation for Black students. 5% of UCL's UK undergraduate intake in 2020 were Black, compared to 15% of young people in East London, from where we draw a large proportion of our intake.

UCL East Schools Engagement and Widening Participation Strategy and Implementation Plan

## Introduction

*'Thank you for all your wonderful work this year. It's been fabulous and the children have been buzzing!'* Headteacher, George Mitchell Primary School

This report covers the fourth year of the programme and synthesises outputs from activities with schools, both virtually and, to a limited extent, in schools, along with digital projects and online resources that were developed because of the Covid pandemic.

There were no visits to campus or to UCL museums during this academic year.

### Programme aims

Raise awareness of UCL in East London

Increase school students' skills and knowledge

Provide knowledge, and understanding, of the opportunities available to young people

### Context

The programme uses the **East** Education Framework: **Experiments, Arts, Society & Technology**<sup>1</sup>. The projects predominately link to the academic departments that will be in UCL East from 2022.

Funded by UCL's Access and Widening Participation Office, we work with schools and colleges with a very high/high proportion of widening participation students<sup>2</sup>, from the 'Parkside' boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest.



*Printmaking Project: Outreach in school*

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<sup>1</sup> As described in the UCL East academic vision <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-east/academic-vision>

<sup>2</sup> As defined by UCL's Access & Widening Participation team, which uses multiple data to inform our work with schools and colleges

## Section One

### Key Outputs

- 24 workshops: 21 virtual and 3 face-to-face workshops in schools
- The three long-term partnerships, started in 2019-20, were maintained
- 100% of schools and colleges returned to take part in the programme, four of whom have returned for the fourth year.
- Resources created
  - 15 films
  - 3D-printed materials including life size gorilla skeletons
  - Thirteen PowerPoint presentations for teachers to use independently in class
  - Downloadable/printed resources such as booklets, quizzes and teacher's packs.
- Online/ digital engagement with 23,837 views
  - [Web pages](#) to support learning
  - [Ask the Expert](#)
- An increase in UCL student volunteers from 21 the previous year to 31 this year, sixteen of whom are BAME.

### UCL East Museums and Schools Programme: Evaluation Methods

We have taken a qualitative research approach, which involved:

- Assessing at teachers' pre-project expectations in virtual meetings
- Post-workshop discussion with workshop leaders
- Post-it notes for school students asking what went well and what could be improved, both for their learning and for the workshop itself, what they enjoyed, didn't find useful
- Feedback forms from teachers and school students
- Photographs of the activities and workshops
- Workshop observation both virtual and face-to-face
- Discussions with teachers, UCL students and academics
- Post project interviews with the Creating Aspirations UCL team



*Creating Aspirations: Virtual workshop with the curator of the Petrie Museum*

## UCL East Museums and Schools Programme: Summary of Programme Activities

### Workshops

All projects are led by UCL academics and/or graduate students, or recent graduates, supported by other UCL students, and include:

- Object-based learning
- A practical element
- Discussion and information about the relevant undergraduate courses
- Online and downloadable resources



*Bio-Robotics Challenge: learning about animal movement by studying the 3D printed gorilla skeleton*

These are the school workshops, which were adapted from the previous year's programmes and the corresponding online offer, with their links to the EAST framework:

Printmaking – one day outreach (Secondary)	Experiments, Arts and Technology
Stepping into Art School- 2 hours virtual workshop (KS4-5)	Arts
Bio-robotics and animal movement Challenge - summer term long (Secondary)	Experiments and Technology
Creating Aspirations- academic year (Year 5)	Arts, Society, Experiments and Technology
Ask the Expert Website- academic year (Year's 4-13)	Arts, Society, Experiments and Technology

## Long term and extension projects

UCL's 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan<sup>3</sup> favours sustained engagement rather than one-off activity, placing a strong emphasis on working with a cohort of students and tracking them through their secondary and tertiary education. There is a strong commitment to supporting and raising student attainment across long-term initiatives, at all stages of the student lifecycle.

We continued with these sustained engagement projects this year:

1. [Creating Aspirations](#): Making Early University Connections through UCL Museums – in its third year, this project works with a year 5 class throughout the year
2. Printmaking Project continues with 4 East London Schools who have taken part annually for 4 years
3. Petchey Academy Partnership continues, now in its fourth year, with a focus on science, technology and computing.

### Signposting

The following projects have been promoted and/or supported involving East London schools

Project	Department	Date
Virtual life drawing	Slade	Spring term 2021
Co-design a Manga_zine: Ancient Sudanese figurines	Archaeology	Summer term 2021
Machine Learning teachers CPD	Computing Engineering	Autumn Term 2020
Visions of a world after Covid	Department of Education, Practice and Society	Summer term 2020
Tomorrows Home at the Museum of the Home	Institute of Healthcare Engineering	Spring term 2021- December 2021



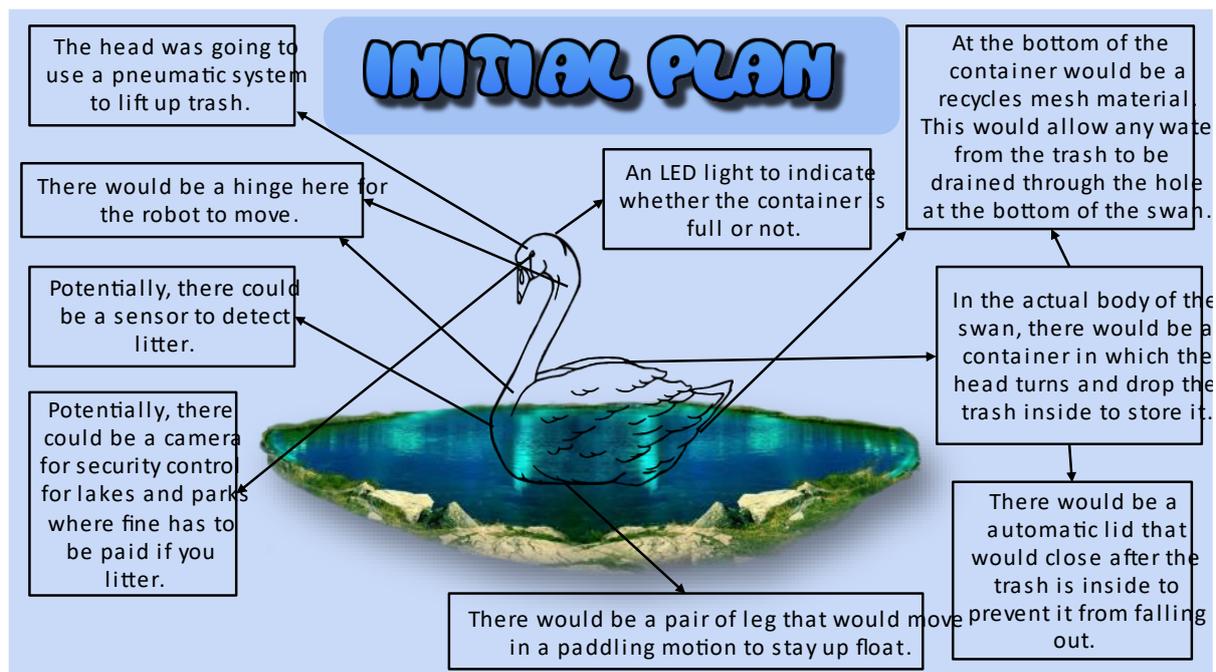
*Printmaking Project: Outreach in school*

<sup>3</sup> P5 2.9 University College London 2019-20 Access and Participation plan

## UCL East Museums and Schools Programme: Schools Participation

'The Head of Sixth form is leading on this as it involves other students who are studying Textiles, Photography, Film, Games Design, Film Studies and Graphics. This is an amazing opportunity for parents and students to be able to access a live [virtual] talk like this.' Head of Art, Stoke Newington School

There were 24 workshops in total, 3 in schools and 21 virtual workshops. 3 schools used the newly created online and downloadable resources to run the Bio-Robotics Challenge supported virtually by UCL students throughout the summer term.



Bio-Robotics Challenge: students' ideas for a bio-inspired robot

There was a reduction in activity because of the pandemic and schools shut for chunks of the year. The data is not available for how many school students took part in activities.

100% of the schools/colleges who participated in 2019-202 also took part this year and five institutions returned for the fourth year: we are meeting our sustained engagement aim.

Table 1 Schools

Name	Borough	WP rating	Workshops	Long term projects (multiple activities)	CPD
BSix 6 <sup>th</sup> form college	Hackney	High	2	Yes	
Stoke Newington School	Hackney	High	4	Yes	
Buxton School	Waltham Forest	High	3		1
Sarah Bonell School	Newham	High	3		1
Kelmscott School	Waltham Forest	High	2	Yes	
Petchey Academy	Hackney	High	3	Yes	1
George Mitchell School	Waltham Forest	High	7	Yes	
<b>Total</b>					
<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

## UCL East Museums and Schools Programme: UCL Staff & Students Participation

*'Thank YOU for the fantastic work you and the UCL Culture team have been doing over the last years with schools/communities in East London! 😊 It's been really inspirational hearing about the projects you've led and overseen, and fantastic for our MA students to have been able to contribute so actively to them, 'Creating Aspirations' in particular. (It was a pleasure and an honour to attend the opening of the museum that students at George Mitchell School in Leyton conceived/curated/realised there, and to be taken by them on a tour of it! 😊)'* Dr Marquard Smith, Course Leader: Museums & Galleries in Education

Table 2 Academics, other staff and departments

Department or UCL institution	Project	Academics	Other staff
Centre for Biodiversity	Bio-robotics	1	
Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering	Bio-robotics	1	
Medical Physics and Biomedical Engineering	Bio-robotics	1	
Slade School of Fine Art	Printmaking	3	1
Computer Science	Bio-robotics	1	
Institute of Education	Creating Aspirations	2	
Psychology & Human development	Creating Aspirations	1	
Various	Ask the Expert	59	5
IT Department	Virtual projects		1
Volunteering Service	Creating Aspirations		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% of projects</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>9</b>



*Bio-Robotics Challenge: UCL student team member making the gibbon movement film in the Grant Museum*

Table 3 The UCL Student Teams

Project	Students	PhD candidates	Alumni
Bio-robotics	13	2	
Printmaking			2
Stepping into Art School			1
Creating Aspirations	13		
Evaluation	2		
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

Students are studying on the following courses: Bachelor of Arts and Science (BASc), Chemical Engineering, Education MA, Education in Museum and Galleries MA, Fine Art, Computer Science and Business, Mechanical Engineering, Natural Sciences, Neuroscience, Psychology, Spanish and German, Spanish and Portuguese.

*'I wanted to update you and tell you that I recently started a full-time job at a charity called the Refugee Council. I am working with refugees and helping them integrate into the UK and genuinely really enjoying my work. It feels great to finally stop writing job applications and to find a job in this current climate! I wanted to tell you as you've always been such a support to me and the experience I've gained from working with you on the Bio-Robotics project will be invaluable in this new role! Thanks for everything.'* Undergraduate student, graduated 2020

*'I would like to ask if you may be my referee... It's a perfect opportunity which beautifully ties together all the strands of learning and experience I love the most: community engagement, outreach, organising events and nature... The Bio-robotics project has been the most enriching working experience I've been involved in, and I would be immensely grateful to have your recommendation.'* Undergraduate student, graduated 2021



*Creating Aspirations (left) and Bio-Robotics (right) student team members*

## Section Two

### Spotlight on Two Projects: Creating Aspirations and Ask the Expert

#### Creating Aspirations



*Creating Aspirations: Student team member delivering the activity booklets to school*

*'I'm really impressed and happy that it [Creating Aspirations] managed to happen at all... could have been really easy to say, "look schools are closed, this is going to be really difficult. They're not going to be able to get into the museum so maybe let's not do it", but I'm really glad that [that the project grew] on the foundation laid by the team last year... We planned a workshop that was going to be in person for January and then lockdown happened and we obviously couldn't do that. So, we created a booklet in the space of a month. It is so well produced, and it looks professional. I'm really proud of how we managed to do that.'* MA student team member

*'WOW! I've just watched your film with Anna [Garnett, Curator Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology] and I LOVE it! George Mitchell children are so lucky to have this splendid resource. We will highlight it on the course and would love to see the resources and attend another meeting when it's scheduled. Sending my sincere congratulations to you all - it really is engaging, informative and so clear with the brilliant illustration cartoons and 3D effects. Well done to all involved - really impressed.'* Caroline Marcus, Senior Teaching Fellow: Museums & Galleries in Education

*'... many children in Cedar class have never been to the museum, then we designed some fun activities ... to make them interested in the museum. Once they are familiar with a particular object, they may be more willing to learn about the culture behind the object, and then have an interest in going to the museum. I hope this programme will plant a seed in their hearts and increase their interest in history and culture. And we did get good feedback from them. They loved the activities and actively participated in them.'* MA student team member

## Overview

Now in its third year, Creating Aspirations engages with the year 5 cohort throughout the academic year. It aims to track students from George Mitchell School, an all-through school, from year 5, (aged 9-10) through secondary and into tertiary education. George Mitchell School is in Waltham Forest, ranked the 35<sup>th</sup> most deprived borough in the UK. Pupil premium at the school is more than 30%, almost triple England's average of ca. 12%. For around 70% of students, English is not their first language. The school has improved its results over recent years, it received a 'Good' from Ofsted in 2016. However, very few students enter higher education.

Creating Aspirations offers learning beyond classroom opportunities through museum and school-based workshops: providing and challenging the children with unfamiliar locations, new subjects and countless cross-curricular references. However, because of the pandemic there were no visits to UCL this year.

Creating Aspirations critically engages George Mitchell School's year 5 students with UCL's museums: through asking questions and coming to their own conclusions the children are inspired to express their own thoughts and ideas.



*Creating Aspirations: Student team member making 'Welcome to the Petrie Museum!' film with the curator*

## Aims

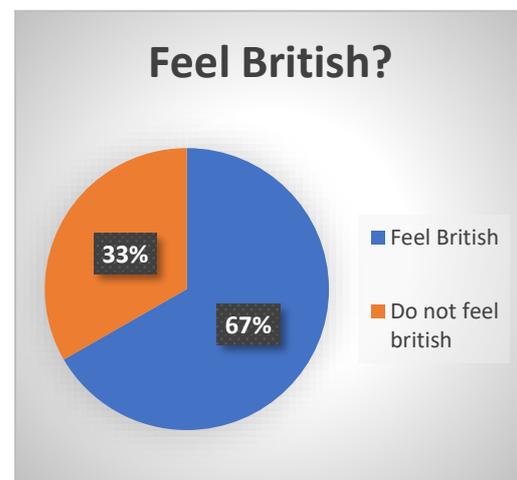
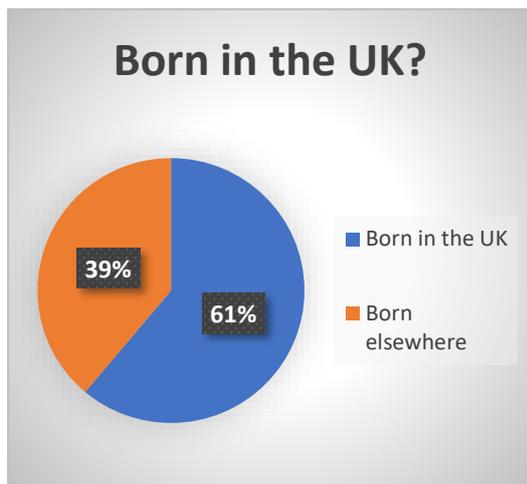
- For the school students
  - Raise attainment
  - Raise aspirations for all students
  - Engagement with the world outside school and the collections of UCL's museums
  - To inspire, excite, increase curiosity, widen horizons
  - To find out about studying at university and life at UCL
- For the IoE MA students
  - Improve employability through a comprehensive experience of creating, designing and delivering an object-based learning experience

## 2020-21 programme

### Cedar Class

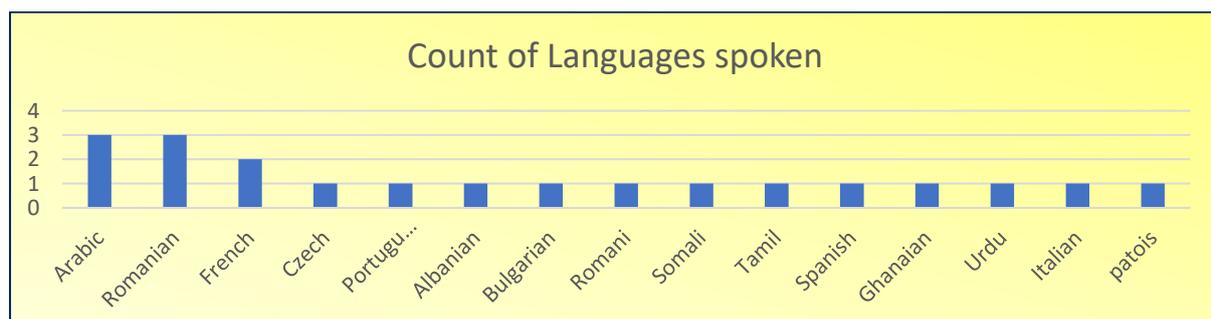
Cedar Class, in year 5, worked with five MA Museums and Galleries in Education students. In addition, eight undergraduate students, recruited via the VSU (Volunteering Students Union), joined the team.

There are 27 students in Cedar class. In addition to English there are 17 different languages spoken by the children. Some of the class took part in a survey in the autumn term with the aim of assessing where the students felt they belonged, languages spoken and if English is spoken at home.



Two out of the 7 students not born in the UK consider themselves British. Two students born in the UK do not consider themselves to be British.

### Languages spoken



Nine of the students speak English at home, eight do not. Including English, 11 students speak two languages, 3 speak three languages and 1 speaks four languages.

There is a relatively high turnover of students in the class. The school is undersubscribed so new students enrol throughout the year, and others leave once their families find a more settled home. New students often arrive with little, or no, English.

This project took place in the spring and summer terms. The recruitment of students and planning activities happened in the autumn term.

The class teacher reported that the dynamics of the class in the summer term were like those in the first term of a normal academic year. Students were unsure of each other and not as confident as would have been expected. The acquisition of English by EAL (English as an additional language) students who were new to English was slower because of online learning and lack of social interaction.

### Outline

Creating Aspirations had two project streams this academic year, which ran in parallel and were delivered by different teams of UCL students:

1. **Discovering Ancient Sudan:** Learning about the Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology with a focus on Ancient Sudanese Culture, with the MA Museums and Galleries in Education students.
2. **Going to University:** Learning about UCL, going to university and studying for a degree, with the undergraduate students who were fluent in some of the languages spoken by the school students.

### Discovering Ancient Sudan



*Creating Aspirations: 3D printed Ankh (left), workshop in school (centre), using the booklets (right)*

Previously Creating Aspirations followed a participatory model but it quickly became apparent that this would not work during the pandemic. As Cedar class could not visit campus and decide which museums they would like to focus on, the Schools Engagement Manager and the class teacher decided to use the Petrie Museum for the project. The UCL Culture team enthusiastically embraced the project, providing curatorial and museum services support throughout. The school adjusted their summer term topic from studying Ancient Benin to Ancient Sudan.

The MA student team created activities including the [Welcome to the Petrie Museum](#) film and a printed [booklet](#). These resources were designed to support the school students whilst the school was shut. The film introduced them to the museum and the printed booklet activity provided information about the 4 objects that have been 3D printed. The booklet, along with a packet of coloured pencils, provided real rather than virtual activities such as doing an archaeological survey of their kitchens as an alternative to all the online learning. It also gave a framework for the workshops through the journey of Ashri, the character created by the MA students, who guided participants through Ancient Sudan.

Workshops started in the spring term and continued until the end of the summer term. There were four virtual workshops and one in school. A school-wide festival was planned but was cancelled because of a surge in Covid cases. It is rescheduled for September 2021. A visit to the Petrie Museum by Cedar class is planned for the autumn term.



*Creating Aspirations: the 3D printed objects used in school*

Virtual Workshop 1: An introductory workshop using the 3D-printed objects to develop visual thinking skills through observation and creative interpretation and to explore the connection between objects, daily practices and uses.

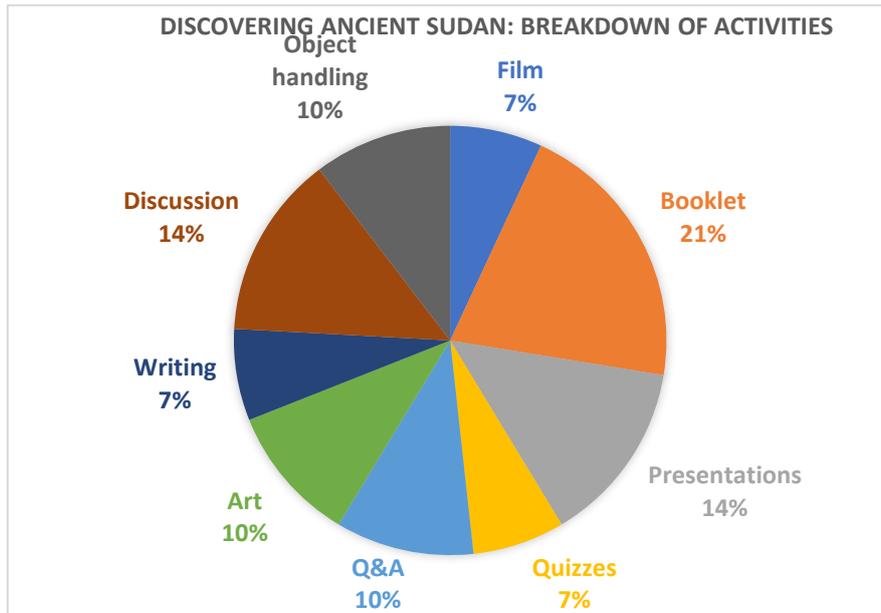
Virtual Workshop 2: Focusing on the Ankh and symbols of life to consider the role of symbols to convey complex ideas. Everyone, in the class and UCL students working at home, made their own symbol of life from clay, linking ideas to objects and identified and deployed different styles of writing used in museums.

Virtual Workshop 3: The limestone frog, the cycle of life and Sudanese gods of fertility exploring how myths can explain the world around us and to identify layers of meaning in a text.

Virtual Workshop 4: Using the shabti's, which are servants for the afterlife, to look at the structure and roles in Ancient Sudanese society.

Workshop 5 in school: Quiz about comparing Ancient Sudanese and modern everyday objects to make the distant past come alive, recap on the learning and evaluate how much knowledge had been retained. Followed by a Q&A with the curator of the Petrie Museum about her career, archaeology and working in a museum.

Virtual Workshop 6: Fun and Games with four activity stations in the classroom including building pyramids and writing a quiz to test the MA students' knowledge. These activities will be run by the school students in the festival in September.



*Creating Aspirations: creations made by the UCL student team during the virtual workshops with the school students. Personal symbol of life (left), Lego pyramid (right)*

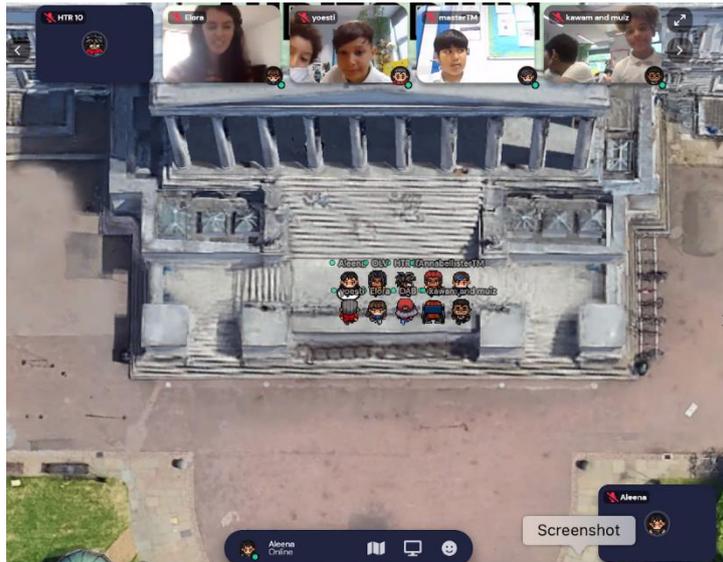
## Going to University

Going to University happened because campus tours were not possible. The UCL student team each made two short films, one in English and the other in one of the languages spoken in Cedar class, about their experience of studying at UCL, their backgrounds, and their journey to UCL.

In the autumn term Cedar class watched the films then made their own films in response, asking questions and saying something about themselves.

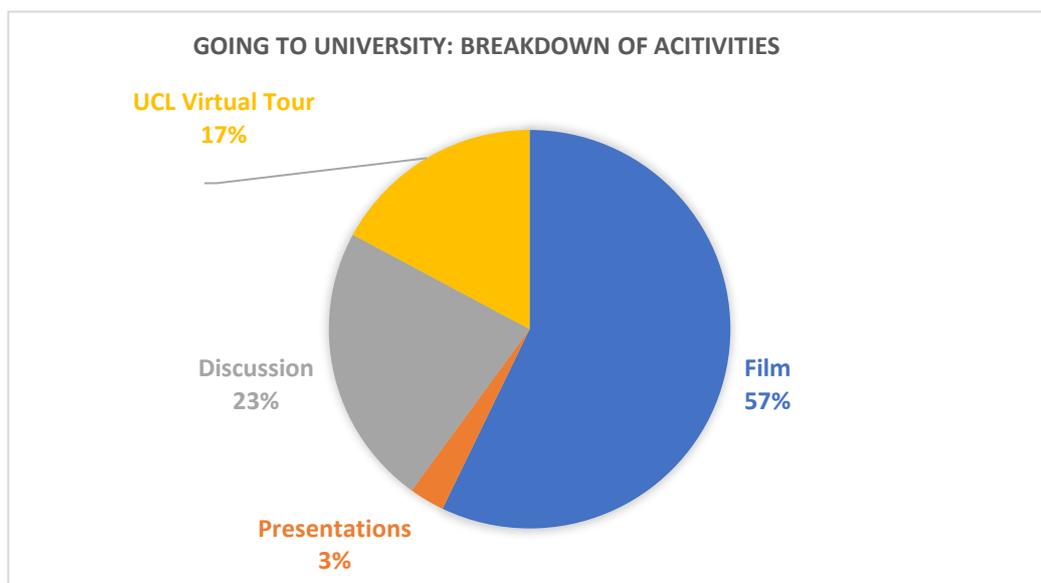
Films were made in Bulgarian, French, Italian, Romanian, Somali, Spanish and Urdu.

Virtual Workshop 1: Finding out more about UCL and gaining an understanding of university life and demonstrating that speaking different languages is a valuable skill that can enable young people to progress to university. The students met each other and chatted in the different languages, followed by a plenary where the class asked more questions.

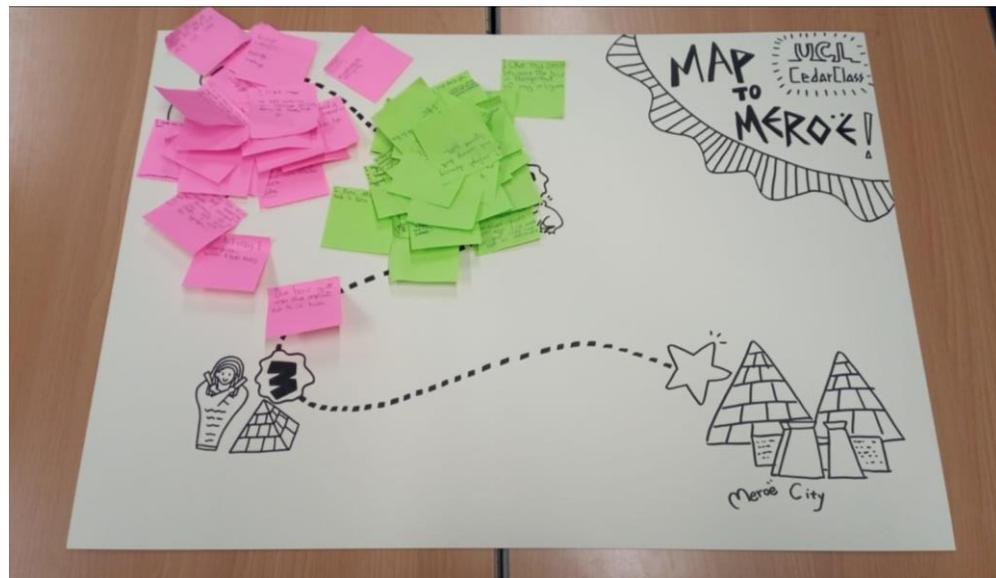


*Creating Aspirations: screen shot of the virtual tour with participants at the top*

Virtual Workshop 2: Presentation about UCL followed by virtual tour of UCL (courtesy of Professor Daniel Richardson, Division of Psychology and Language Sciences who created it for his first-year students) ending with a quiz.



## Project Evaluation



*Creating Aspirations: evaluation map with one station for each workshop*

Feedback from the workshops was collected from the school students who told us what went well and what was challenging on post-it notes. They appreciated the practical activities most, the clay work was the most popular. Students were often self-reflective and suggested ways they themselves could do better.

Comments included:

- *The thing that I liked for the last lesson was I could make the ankh. I enjoyed that because we used clay and tried to make it with all the symbols.*
- *I liked working the symbol of life because it was fun. I found it difficult because it wasn't exactly as an ankh. Next time, I am going to make it look like an ankh.*
- *The lesson I enjoyed drawing the story of heqet and khumum, it was very fun as well.*
- *[What went well] Drawing the story of God or your own religion. The challenging part is that we had to do it in our [own] stories.*
- *I like my cross but next time I will do better.*
- *The session I found challenging was drawing ankh and remembering the story. What I loved was learning about the goddess.*

Given the amount of online learning this academic year it is not surprising that the students enjoyed the practical activities so much. Everyone took part in the practical activities during the virtual workshops and shared the results with the aim of building a rapport between the UCL students and the school students. This seems to have worked as the school students were excited to meet the UCL students in person and some had independently made drawings to give to them on their arrival. The UCL students said that going into school was one of the highlights of the project and were gratified and surprised that the class knew their names.



*Creating Aspirations: school students giving answers to the quiz questions*

#### Outcomes

- Knowledge and understanding of Ancient Sudan
- Knowledge of university and the range of subjects including formerly unknown ones
- Understanding of the world of work
- Confidence building especially for students having English as their second language
- Vocabulary extension
- Descriptive writing skills
- IT skills

## UCL team feedback



*Creating Aspirations: The team at school with one member joining virtually from Denmark*

The team were interviewed by one of the MA students for her dissertation. Below is a selection of questions and responses.

From your perspective, what were the successes of the programme? What were the limitations?

*'I think that all of them [workshops] were successful ... when you work with children, you need to use different methods and different activities to engage them... we thought about it in the process of not only having reading or drawing but different tasks and different activities that could stimulate the students. I really liked the quiz because ... it was kind of evaluation on what the students learned throughout the project...The students seem really engaged in it as well.'* MA student team member

*'The whole online learning thing was challenging and perhaps limited what we could do. We tested out a lot of different kinds of activities, but obviously it was very difficult because of the context and the way that we're delivering it. I think that might have also limited sometimes how participatory it was as we were delivering things to the students. They didn't get a chance to see the museum and see the objects which might have led them ... [to] express their interest, then, for us to develop it in that direction ... It felt like we were producing things for them to do rather than us having feedback on ... what they were interested in doing.'* MA student team member

*'Successes include engaging a new audience with the Sudanese collection at the Petrie (which is comparatively unknown) and exciting younger audiences about Sudanese history, creative engagement with the source material and output production – particularly the production of the project booklet which has been universally praised across the Department for its innovative style and beautiful design.'* Curator, Petrie Museum

*'I think it's been very successful in terms of broadening students' interests and knowledge, and students are very engaged in it. But there may be a lack of quantitative assessment.'* MA student team member

From your perspective, what were the most challenging aspects?

*'The downside may be that most of our activities are online, and [so] our communication with the children is not timely. In addition, we usually design a lot of activities for them, and the feedback between activities is compressed... We did not have enough time, and we were not able to observe the facial expressions of each child because we are at a distance, which also affected the reception of some feedback.'* MA student team member

*'I don't think the students participated well in writing activities. For example, we invited them to write down their feedback on a note. I thought they would be very excited about it, but I noticed that in my group, only a little girl had a clear idea of what she wanted to do, others were actually not willing to write, even simple words. After the girl finished her writing, all the group members copied her answers, so I think many students may not be interested or confident in writing.'* MA student team member

*'I think our evaluation was not very successful. It was really difficult to get feedback from children and school in time so that we cannot adjust our workshops and activities based on children's ideas. We also started the evaluation process very late, which should have been set up at the beginning of the programme.'* MA student team member

*'...at the beginning of the project, I felt that the whole learning structure was not systematic, and the learning outcomes of students were not well evaluated. I don't really have a clear idea of how much the students have learned from the project. Other than that, we've managed to get them interested in the museum and ancient Sudanese culture.'* MA student team member

*'It was sometimes difficult for me to find the time to engage with the project or to provide feedback in a timely way, given that aspects of the project took place during a very busy academic year.'*  
Curator, Petrie Museum

Do you think the museum-school partnership helped with children/young people's learning? From what aspects?

*'I definitely think that it helped with their learning, and I think it might engage them more in the cultural aspects within their local cities...I think it's a really great way to make partnership that many schools could actually benefit from...'* MA student team member

*'The activities and learning materials designed by us helped to broaden students' knowledge and support their school curriculum. Museum education and museum-school partnerships have positive impacts in encouraging the young people to pursue high education in the future. From the children's feedback, I noticed that many of them remembered the terms and stories they learned in class and they started to have a picture of museum and university in their minds. For example, after the clay workshop, the students wrote labels for their own symbol of life, which is similar to a curator's job in a museum. The school, as a vital partner, also knows better about the children, and that can help museum educators to develop museum learning materials which cater to children's interests and needs.'* MA student team member

A list of the learning methods: Introduction videos, booklet, object-handling, clay workshop, drawing workshop, pottery workshop, creative writing workshop, Q&A, quiz, games, etc. Which learning methods were successful and which were not?

*'I genuinely think that these were all successful – but in particular the video, the object handling and the booklet as I think this really helped to mitigate the fact that the museum was closed due to Covid and allowed the students to feel connected with the museum.'* Curator, Petrie Museum

*'... all of the methods worked quite well. My favourite ones are the booklet and the clay workshop. The booklet creates a strong link between the workshops with Ashri's story line, and that can inspire the children to explore more knowledge as the story continues. The booklet is also a valuable legacy that can be used by other people again and again, such as at the Great Get Together.'* MA student team member

#### Personal reflections

*'I think I am not good at communicating with students in English, but if we do not have a fixed division of tasks, I also have the opportunity to participate in teaching activities, I think it is also a good opportunity to challenge myself. Then, I was very inspired by the fact that I saw how the classroom was like in primary school in the UK. How Fergus [the class teacher] got along with his students and how to organize classroom activities were also very interesting to me.'* MA student team member

*'I think our team is great and international, which increases my ability of cultural communication. Everyone helped me a lot in both my work and life. I feel that meeting you and working with you have brought me a lot of benefits. This project also enabled me to know more about museum education and generated a lot of new thinking. It was a very interesting experience.'* MA student team member

It was hard to evaluate the virtual workshops. There were several factors: the impossibility to see all the class when they were taking part in the activities, and difficulty in hearing the students meant that they had to stand in front of the computer individually to speak to the team. Many students found this daunting and were shy and as a result group discussion was stilted. However, everyone adjusted to the format and the final workshop, which took place after the face-to-face workshop, was much more relaxed.

Because of the poor writing skills (in English) of some of the students, the post-it feedback was not a suitable method of getting information. Ordinarily these students would talk about their experiences, but this was not possible.

Attitudes to the workshops were assessed by asking the whole class yes/no questions and they were asked to raise their hands to answer. This helped give an immediate sense of what went well and what needed to change.

The printed booklet, used at home and in school, anchored the project and gave a clear structure as well as information on Ancient Sudan for the students to refer to throughout. It was one of the most successful innovations.

Data was hard to obtain. The school students did a pre-project attitudes to university and museums survey but the post-project one could not happen. Post-it notes were written after most of the workshops, but the results not shared in time to help plan the next workshop. The richest data set was on the languages spoken and the sense of feeling British, or not. This information meant that the project had a focus on languages in the Going to University strand. The school students were initially reluctant to make their filmed response in their first languages but with one-to-one encouragement and working outside of the classroom they became keen to make them.

The UCL team were challenged by the lack of a defined programme. This is partly due to the participatory ethos with the class directing the course of the project over a year, which means that there is not a set outcome. The main factor was the pandemic and the stop-start school year with workshops cancelled at the last minute, plans changing, and activities compressed into the summer term when schools re-opened. This coincided with the academically busy time of year for the UCL students.

The UCL MA student team met every challenge and set back with fortitude and resourcefulness. They produced resources that enriched the project and that will be used in the future by both Creating Aspirations and the Petrie Museum. Their combined talents in imaginative planning, design, film making and object-based learning led to a strong cohesive team that worked to individual strengths whilst allowing each to develop and learn new skills.

*'I really appreciate the time, thought and energy you all [the MA student team] put in and I know the activities and materials will be used well beyond the event. LLDC took 4 boxes of the booklets to hand out at east London schools they're working with and plenty of people took away extra booklets and masks for family and friends (one person took 4 books to send to family in New Zealand – which is certainly a farther reach than we'd anticipated!).'* UCL Community Engagement Manager (East)

Working participatorily with Cedar was very difficult. The festival in September will be co-produced but the activities were developed with between the student teams and the class teacher not the whole class.

## Conclusion

Despite the huge barriers - school shut, museum shut and UCL students unable to come to the UK - Creating Aspirations was a success, with innovative thinking leading to the production of high-quality resources that will be used in the future. The school students enjoyed themselves after spending weeks at home, the school appreciated the efforts of the team and there are plans to expand the partnership with, for example, CPD, forging links with other UCL departments, and embedding the Ancient Sudanese topic in the scheme of work for Year 5.

**Spin-off event:** The Great Get Together



*The Great Get Together: playing mancala*

The Great Get Together is a fun, free family-friendly event that is part of a nationwide celebration of our different communities, organised in partnership with the Jo Cox Foundation. The UCL Culture activities took place on 8 August in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park at the event organised by the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC). Around 150 attendees took part in family-friendly activities adapted from Creating Aspirations. The 3D-printed replicas of Petrie Museum objects, the activity booklet and activities from the Fun and Games workshop introduced and showcased UCL and the Petrie Museum.

There were high dwell times, several repeat visitor families, deep conversations. People made lots of masks, took part in mancala battles throughout the day, and the 3D objects were a top hit. The Park Champions mentioned that the stand was the most consistently busy and it stayed open the longest.



*The Great Get Together: family activities*

### **Ask the Expert**

*'[My colleague] mentioned the 'Ask the Expert' scheme in one of our IHE Impact Fellow forums... My background is regenerative medicine. Please do let me know if you have any questions and I'd love to be a part of this...'* Dr Nazia Mehrban, Senior Research Fellow, HEA Fellow

*'I'm really looking forward to taking part in this project and contribute as much as I can.'* Spyridon Varlas PhD, MRSC, Postdoctoral Research Fellow

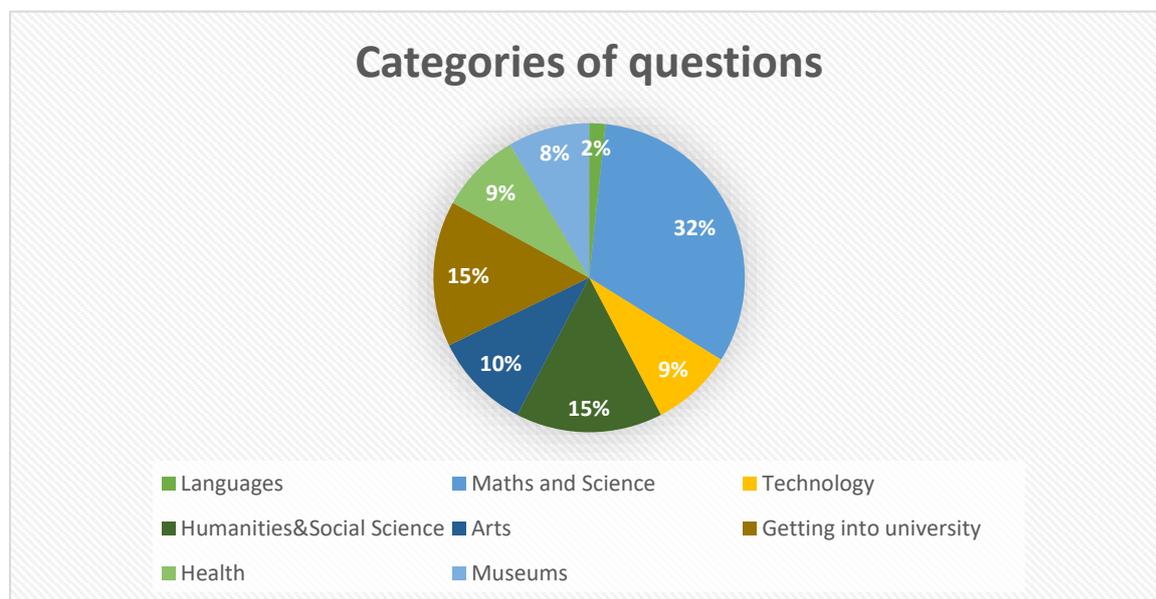
After a year of disrupted learning, brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent closures of schools this academic year, [Ask the Expert](#) reconnects school students with learning and helps them discover more about subjects studied at university.

Fifty-nine academics and five non-academic UCL professionals joined the project, with expertise in health, humanities and social sciences, languages, maths, science and technology, museums and applying to university. Students aged 7-18 explored the website, looked through the experts' biographies and could then submit a question via the online form.

The website had **22,230** pageviews from August 2020 to July 2021, the most popular page being ['How Does a remote control work on the TV?'](#) with 2,966 views followed by ['Why do the rich keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer?'](#) with 2,828 views.

70 questions were submitted and answered by 37 experts. Questions came from 21 schools, 16 from the state sector and 2 from abroad (Kathmandu, Nepal, and Jakarta, Indonesia). 34 of the questions were submitted by students from the target East London boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

'... Others are really good misconception questions (no light in space), others I almost feel like they think they read the answer somewhere already and want to test us!!! (e.g. Why is the sky blue - there is a glib answer, but truly explaining it isn't easy)' Mark Fuller, Outreach Coordinator and Ogden Science Officer, Department of Physics & Astronomy



Science, maths and technology questions were the most popular, getting 39% of the questions, with questions about languages receiving the least. This reflects the subjects taken at A level in 2021 with maths being the most popular subject and the sciences all in the top 10. There has been a steady decline in A level entry for English Literature and modern foreign languages since 2018. <sup>4</sup>

The questions can be divided into three main categories:

1. Questions such as '[How do you get tuberculosis?](#)' and '[How are leaves formed?](#)' demonstrate a desire to understand one specific thing.
2. Career and education progression such as '[What Career path/degrees/A level would I need to take to become a vet/marine biologist?](#)' and '[What is UCAS and why are UCAS points useful?](#)'. These questions mostly came prior to the time when school students were choosing GCSE and A Levels.
3. Questions with a philosophical bent such as '[Why do people think?](#)', '[So! Are people cruel and if not why?](#)' and '[To what extent do you believe all art is a form of protest?](#)' which often challenged the experts and made them think.

*'This is the best kind of question you can ask. It really makes me think. The fact that there is no simple answer makes it wonderfully good to consider. Thanks for asking it.'* Joe Cain, Professor of History and Philosophy of Biology in his answer to '[What was the first country to be discovered?](#)'

<sup>4</sup> <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/analysis-a-level-results-2021/>

Ask the Expert was designed for school students to ask some of the UK's outstanding academics any question at all during a time of disrupted learning and huge challenges in education. The UCL community responded and willingly gave their time and shared their expertise. It has provided interesting answers to thoughtful and inquisitive questions and been viewed by over 20,000 people and continues to be a valuable resource for school students.

Now the pandemic is more under control and learning returning to more as it was in pre-pandemic times, Ask the Expert is being assessed. The experts have been asked if they would like to continue, the vast majority do and new experts are being recruited to cover areas, such as Law, where there are gaps. The design of the site is being tweaked and a new feature of short films highlighting answers. These will go on the website and be used to promote Ask the Expert! To East London schools.



*Ask the Expert: Stills from the film made by Community Engagement & Public Arts Trainee (left)*

## Section Three

### Lessons Learnt

#### Challenges and Solutions during the Covid19 Pandemic

*'Despite the huge impact that Covid has had on our initial plans of running the bio-robotics enrichment programme, I am pleased to say that I was so impressed with the concept and have designed a project that we now run in the Design & Technology subject area for our year 8s and 9s.'*  
Teacher on Bio-robotics challenge

The effects of the pandemic on the UCL East Museums and Schools programme were profound. Plans had to be flexible so activities could run either virtually or face-to-face and events were cancelled at the last minute as schools or year groups isolated.

Gathering information and data for evaluation during the pandemic has been challenging. Only one of the secondary schools has returned any completed feedback forms and teachers have given minimal feedback about how projects have gone in schools. It is very difficult to assess a virtual workshop when there is one camera angle of a class, it is hard to hear what the school students are saying or see how they are enjoying and learning during the activity or interacting each other.

More UCL students were recruited than in previous years. There was a lot of interest in volunteering and the students were fantastic. They provided thoughtful ideas, came up with great solutions, and coped with changing situations calmly and with equanimity.

Table 4 The effects of the pandemic on the programme and solutions to mitigate this

The impact of Covid-19			
Agency	Challenge	Solution and/or future actions	
Schools and colleges	Schools shut for long periods	Create online and virtual resources for teachers to share with students	
	Safeguarding protocols for virtual engagement	Schools hosted all virtual activities, all UCL staff and students received training	
	Rapid changes in the situation in schools	Adopt a flexible approach planning activities to be either face-to-face or virtual. Being prepared to cancel activities	
	Online learning and digital poverty amongst school students	Create physical resources and supply materials to be sent to schools some of which can be sent out to pupils working at home.	
	Communication with teachers dealing with a complex and ever-changing situation	Being patient, accepting that replies and information might not be forthcoming	
	<b>Printmaking Project</b>		
	Running the project	Adapt the programme by offering 'Stepping into Art School' and acting fast to organise face-to-face workshops in schools when possible.	
	<b>Creating Aspirations Primary School Project</b>		
	Running the project for the entire academic year	Delay starting to work with the class until the spring term. Concentrate on developing resources in the autumn term.	

	Cedar class getting to know UCL students	Allow plenty of time in the virtual sessions for introductions
	Participatory ethos	As the project progressed the UCL students took ownership. Towards the end of the academic year Cedar class were more involved in decision making. But overall, the project was not participatory.
	Festival cancelled	Ran a virtual workshop to pilot the activities. Reschedule for early September
<b>Bio-Robotics and Animal Movement</b>		
	Running the project	Adapted the programme to run in the summer term as a virtual event, the Robotics Challenge.
	Robotic kits	Kits remained with the 2019-20 schools. 2 continued with the project so kept the kits. Third participating school was adjacent to the third school, so school staff delivered the kit.
	Culmination cancelled due to a spike in Covid cases and year groups going into isolation.	No solution found
<b>Ask the Expert</b>		
	Lack of experts in a particular field	Approach individual faculties to help find people
	Too many questions directed to one expert	Merge similar questions together to be answered as one
	Questions about individuals' applications to UCL	Added a note to the online form saying that these types of questions would not be answered, but they keep coming in.
<b>Evaluation</b>		
	Lack of data. Teachers unable to collect data and feedback from their students	No solution found. Ask them again early September.
	A survey asking teachers from schools that have been part of the programme asking how they think the programmes could be developed cancelled	Run survey in next academic year or when there is less pressure on teachers
	Focus groups with school students cancelled	No solution found. Plan for this in 2021-22
	How to gather qualitative data without face-to-face contact	Asked colleagues across the museum sector through Group for Education in Museums. Focus group formed and a virtual conference held in spring 2020 to share learning and ideas.
Museums	Open intermittently with social distancing, no school visits this academic year.	Create resources about the objects to go to schools
UCL students	Recruiting students without being able to meet face-to-face	Advertise opportunities via the VSU, promote to students on seminars (MA Museum and Galleries in Education) and VSU online event

	Communications with students studying from abroad	Arrange meetings to suit different time zones, meet people individually if need be, record the meetings. Create Teams for each project to share information.
	Keeping safe	Safeguarding for virtual training mandatory. Make sure that students are confident in what they must deliver and that they know that they can say no to tasks/activities. Lateral flow tests prior to any face-to-face contact.
	Uncertainty	Reiterate the difficulty of planning and working with schools in the pandemic. Have contingency plans for activities. Support the students.
Academics and departments	Campus shut for most of the academic year	Work virtually with colleagues

## Reflection

The UCL East Museums and Schools programme continues to meet its aims of raising awareness of UCL in East London and providing knowledge and understanding of the opportunities available to young people. Due to the lack of data, it has not been possible to assess the increase in students' skills and knowledge and impact on attainment this academic year.

Strong relationships with several schools are now firmly established, allowing further enrichment activities to take place in the next academic year, thus cementing the school students' knowledge and understanding of what UCL can offer.

The programme changed dramatically, and quickly, to a virtual offer. Teachers were impressed by the online resources created and the 3D-printed objects provided a valuable link to the museums and object-based learning. These materials will continue to be used. Combined with visits to the museums and campus these resources will give a richer offer to schools.

One of the profound effects of the pandemic was the lack of personal contact. This particularly affected the UCL student teams. Out of the 29 students only 4 met school students and this was on one occasion. For school students, meeting UCL students, who are not that much older than they are, is one of the highlights as it gives them a great insight into university life and helps them to imagine themselves studying at UCL. Online meetings, films and videos mitigated this to some extent but it was a poor substitute.

The web pages and blogs, Ask the Expert in particular, have reached a broader audience. Although this is not within the remit of this programme, it is gratifying to have questions from young people in the Isle of Wight, Jakarta and Kathmandu. East London school students sent in most questions and giving all these school students the chance to engage with UCL certainly raises their awareness of the university and broadens the reach of the UCL East Museums and Schools programme.

Emma Bryant

Schools Engagement Manager: Museums