Section 18 Student representation and voice

18. Student representation and voice

18.1. Students' Union UCL

Information on UCL Students' Union, how to run for election and how to find a student representative.

Students' Union UCL helps you to do more at UCL, experience something you’ve always dreamt of, turn a curiosity into a new passion and help you reach your potential. The Union cares about the things you care about, it’s made up of all kinds of people from all kinds of places and it’s there to fight for you when you need someone in your corner.

The Union is the representative body of all UCL students. It’s run by students for students and is a registered charity, independent of UCL. All UCL students at every level are automatically members of the Union (but can opt out), and student leaders are elected annually by and from all current students. The elected student leaders who work full time for you are called Sabbatical Officers and they represent students on various UCL committees and influence decisions that matter to students. Alongside the Sabbatical Officers there are more than 2000 other student representatives, who cover every part of UCL life, from your programme, research studies, department, faculty or the UCL accommodation you live in.

Further information:

- Students' Union UCL
- Make a change | Students' Union UCL

18.2. Student clubs & societies

Information on student societies.
At Students’ Union UCL, there are over 320 different student-led clubs and societies for you to get involved in. Maybe you are interested in sports with our TeamUCL clubs or low commitment exercise with our Project Active scheme? Perhaps you are keen to perform on-stage in the Bloomsbury Theatre or you want to learn about and celebrate different cultures? With such a diverse offering available there is bound to be something that sparks your interest! Clubs and Societies are a great way to develop your skills and find a community at UCL. The Welcome Fair in late September is the perfect chance to meet them all in one place and learn more about what they have on offer.

**UCL Technology Society**

The society most relevant to Computer Science is the Technology Society (TechSoc), which has a large number of members from the department. TechSoc puts on a full programme of events, from workshops to hackathons, tech talks by external speakers, and other social events.

Further information:
- Clubs and societies | Students’ Union UCL
- What's on? | Students’ Union UCL
- Technology Society | Students’ Union UCL

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18.3. Academic Representatives (Course Reps, Lead Departmental Reps, & Faculty Reps)

Students’ Union UCL is there to make sure you have the best possible time while you are studying at UCL. One of the ways they do that is by working with departments and faculties to ensure that every student is represented and has a voice in the way that the university works, which is achieved through their academic representative scheme.

Every student at UCL will have a **Course Representative** who will be their eyes, ears, and voice. They will work closely with staff in the department to make sure that they understand what you most value, and take action to deal with things you would like to see improve. They will also work with your **Lead Department Representative** as well as your **Faculty Representatives** and the Students’ Union to make things better across the whole of UCL.

**Course Representatives**

Students from each degree programme will elect a Course Representative (Course Rep) to represent them. The Course Representatives will be members of the Staff Student Consultative Committee, which is the main departmental forum for student feedback and agency.

**Lead Departmental Representatives**

Once Course Reps are appointed, two will be appointed as Lead Departmental Representatives (Lead Reps): one for undergraduate programmes and one for postgraduate taught programmes. The Lead Reps will co-Chair their respective Staff Student Consultative Committees, be members of the Departmental Teaching Committee, which is the department's principal body for academic governance, and liaise between the Students' Union and the Course Representatives.

**Faculty Representatives**
Faculty Representatives will be appointed as members of the Faculty Staff Student Consultative Committee, will work closely with the Students’ Union to identify trends and opportunities for improvement, and raise issues to the Faculty Teaching Committee for discussion.

**Elections**

Academic Representatives are appointed during early October. If you take up a representative role, the Students’ Union will work closely with you to provide training, support, and advice, and you’ll be able to change the experience of everyone on your course or in your department for the better. Even if you do not want to take up a role yourself, keep an eye out for your chance to vote for which students you feel will do the best job.

Further information:

- CS Staff Student Consultative Committees & Academic Representatives
- Academic Representatives | Students’ Union UCL
- Directory of Academic Reps | Students' Union UCL
- Section 6: Student Academic Representation | UCL Academic Manual

**18.4. Departmental Staff Student Consultative Committees**

Information on the role of the Departmental Staff-Student Consultative Committee.

Every department at UCL has a Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) that meets at least three times a year. Staff Student Consultative Committees are meetings where Academic Reps and staff work together to develop solutions to students’ concerns, and prioritise areas for improvement. SSCCs are co-chaired by your Lead Department Representative. Computer Science has separate undergraduate and postgraduate taught SSCCs.

Further information:

- CS Staff Student Consultative Committees & Academic Representatives
- Section 6.4: Staff Student Consultative Committees | UCL Academic Manual
- Section 7: Student Representation on UCL Academic Standing Committees and Sub-Committees | UCL Academic Manual

**18.5. Student voice - other ways to feed back**

Other ways (specific to the department/ programme) that students can give feedback, including local processes and key contacts.

**18.5.1. Staff office hours**
Each Programme Director and Module Leader will hold a regular office hour during term time (for modules this will be during the term in which the module is delivered.) These sessions are intended as informal drop-ins where students can raise any issues of concerns, ideas for improvement, or problems they may be experiencing. You are welcome to attend these sessions without notification or appointment; most sessions operate a lobby-based queue system.

Office hours will either be listed in the timetable or advertised to students by the responsible staff. The aim is for these sessions to run regularly, but they cannot be guaranteed to run every week. You should feel free to contact the relevant staff by email where an office hour is not available.

18.5.2. Surveys and questionnaires

You will be invited to provide feedback on your individual modules via Module Evaluative Questionnaires (MEQs) at the end of each term. These questionnaires ask about your learning experience, the resources and materials you have been provided with, the teaching you have received, and your views on what could be improved. More information on student feedback surveys is given in Section 19 Student feedback | CS Student Handbook.

18.5.3. Unitu

Unitu is an online communications tool that students can use to raise and discuss ideas and issues with their peers and Academic Representatives. Items can be discussed, voted on, and optionally escalated by Academic Representatives for the attention on the department's staff. Where appropriate, the department will respond and provide feedback on any actions it has taken to address or take forward ideas and issues raised.

Unitu has proven best suited for discussion of matters relating to programmes as a whole, sets of modules, departmental policy, or over-arching regulations and is therefore not a replacement for Moodle discussion forums. Matters relating to the day to day operation and delivery of specific modules, for example queries about teaching materials, assessment tasks, TA support, the office hours, and provision of feedback, are usually best resolved with the relevant lecturer, and ideally posted via the module's Moodle discussion forum. This ensures that all students on the module can benefit both from the query itself and the response. (If a student has posted to Moodle and has not received a response within a reasonable timeframe then they should contact the Module Administrator for advice.)

Unitu and the Staff Student Consultative Committee

The Departmental Staff Student Consultative Committees may elect to review issues raised since a previous meeting and the actions taken by the department. However, Unitu is a live resource and both students and their Course Representatives can review posts and progress at any time. An issue raised via Unitu may be discussed at the Departmental Staff Student Consultative Committee.
18.6. Students’ Union Advice Service

The Students’ Union Advice Service is available to all current UCL students, as well as those who have interrupted their studies or recently completed their programme. Trained and experienced staff are ready to support you with any difficulties that might occur during your time at UCL. The Advice Service specialises in:

- **Academic issues** - including extenuating circumstances, plagiarism and complaints
- **Housing concerns** - including contract checks and housemate disputes
- **Money and Debt advice** – including budgeting and income maximisation
- **Employment** - including unpaid wages and part time employment contracts
- The team can also offer help and support with many other legal and university matters

The service is free, independent, impartial and confidential. No information shared with the service is shared with your department or any other university staff unless you request it or give your permission. Students can make an appointment or attend a drop-in session for advice and support.

Further information:
- Advice Service | Students’ Union UCL

18.7. Student complaints

UCL aims to ensure that every student is satisfied with their experience of UCL. However, we recognise that from time to time problems do arise and students may wish to express concern or dissatisfaction with aspects of UCL or the quality of services provided.

18.7.1. Informal resolution
Many complaints can be resolved at an informal or local level without needing to submit a formal complaint. Students can speak to their Personal Tutor, Programme Leader, Departmental or Faculty Tutor, or Course Representative if they have any concerns about their programme. They can also speak to the UCL Student Mediator or the Students’ Union’s Advice Service. UCL strongly encourages this kind of resolution and does expect students to have attempted some form of informal resolution before making a formal complaint.

Contact details are available as follows:

- Personal Tutors (who are indicated in each student’s Portico record) via the UCL Directory.
- Programme Leaders via Section 2: Introduction to the Department and Faculty - CS Student Handbook.
- Departmental Tutor and Faculty Tutor via Section 2: Introduction to the Department and Faculty | CS Student Handbook.
- Course Representatives via in the Directory of Academic Reps | Students' Union UCL.
- Students’ Union contacts are available via the Advice Service | Students’ Union UCL.

Though we appreciate that it can sometimes feel difficult to raise concerns (particularly about other people), we strongly encourage any students who are experiencing difficulties, unwanted conduct, or other issues, to raise them to an appropriate person as soon as they can. The department’s leadership is committed to treating students’ concerns seriously and taking any action as expeditiously as possible.

18.7.2. Formal complaints

If an issue cannot be resolved at a local level, students may feel they need to submit a formal complaint using UCL’s Student Complaints Procedure. UCL aims to ensure that all complaints are treated fairly, impartially, effectively and in a timely manner, without fear of victimisation. The Complaints Procedure applies across all Schools, Faculties, Academic Departments and Professional Service Divisions. Students’ attention should be drawn to the timescales set out in the Procedure.

Further information:

- Section 10: UCL Student Complaints Procedure | UCL Academic Manual
- UCL Student Mediator | UCL
- Advice Service | Students' Union UCL