Staff Handbook

Understanding The Academy Ethos

The UCL Academy

Contents

Additional Guidance

This is one of two key staff handbooks. This handbook should be read in conjunction with other Academy key policies that are available on request from HR and on the staff shared area. Key policies such as safeguarding, ethical behaviour etc. will also be given to new staff when they start at The Academy.

An additional operational handbook is emailed to all staff prior to the start of The Academy year giving clear guidance on all operations, procedural and HR related matters.

1 What are the **ethos**, **culture** and **vision** of The Academy?

The UCL Academy opened in September 2012.
We have grown to become a highly regarded, oversubscribed and successful secondary school providing a broad, academic and inspiring educational experience for the local Camden community. As the Sponsor, UCL's vision is for The Academy to educate global citizens with the confidence, collaborative skills and aspirations to make a difference.

We want The **UCL** Academy to fire the imagination of its students and to support them to develop in ways that stand them in good stead for their future lives and responsibilities as individuals, employees and citizens.

What are The Academy's key priorities?

1. High academic and personal standards for pupils and a commitment to developing individual potential.
2. Specialisms in maths and science.
3. Languages at the heart of the curriculum.
4. A mission to provide an education for global citizenship.

Over time the vision for **UCL** Academy will continue to develop, but the founding philosophies, values, and principles of the sponsor **UCL** remain the constant, guiding core of our work.

The key principles of **UCL** which guide The Academy are:

- That world class theory and research informs staff practices and the **UCL** Academy's policies;
- That professional learning requires reflection and intellectual rigour;
- That theory developed from practice has parity of esteem to theory developed within the 'Academy';
- Developing links with academies, schools and colleges around the world to build a global network;
- That developing ideas within The **UCL** Academy will be peer reviewed and shared with wider audiences.

With regards to learning, it should:

- Be deep not shallow;
- Be collaborative;
- Foster adaptive capabilities;
- Encourage self-motivation and independence;
- Be research based and active;
- Located in problem-solving approaches;
- Located in real life settings;
- Develop reflection and skills of metacognition.

And that the curriculum will:

- Be sophisticated and dynamic;
- Emphasize links between subjects;
- Draw subjects together to work on complex issues and problems;
- Encourage consideration and skills in ethical decision making and behaviour;
- Cultivate self-direction and individual interests;
- Demand innovative teaching styles and techniques;
- Specialize in STEM subjects and languages;
- Celebrate humanities, arts and culture.

UCL is keen that The Academy should support all students to develop responsibility for their learning, ensuring that they continue to be challenged and stimulated by their learning throughout their time at The Academy. The UCL Academy therefore is committed to exploring the viability of "stage-not-age" principles, with students moving through the curriculum levels as they are ready, and not necessarily when they reach a particular age.

The **UCL** Academy has a strong focus on community and belonging. Students are members of both a household (The Academy has five) and a mentor group: a small group of students, eventually ranging in age from 11-18, who meet together regularly and who are 'mentored' by a member of staff. Households provide a focus for intra-school activities; mentor groups ensure that students build strong support networks, including with their staff mentor to enable them to tackle the challenges young people encounter during their Academy lives.

2 How do students learn? **Connected Curriculum,** and **Self-Directed Learning.**

How do students learn?

At **UCL** Academy, we practice and encourage collaborative, engaging and exciting learning through a new curriculum and unique learning spaces using technologies to support all aspects of learning.

Teachers are encouraged to be adventurous, innovative and collaborative while at the same time ensuring that students make outstanding progress.

The key features of learning at UCL Academy are defined by:

- The Connected Curriculum
- Collaborative Learning
- The Education of the Whole Child and Self-Directed Learning

What is the Connected Curriculum?

The Academy curriculum is based on the premise that students can learn best when they can make meaning and sense from their learning.

Using the **IMYC** curriculum as its basis, The Academy's connected curriculum emphasises specialist subject teaching, within a broadly thematic framework.

These themes **(Big Ideas and Grand Challenges)** act as a thread running through a half term of work and urge students to apply their learning from a range of subjects.

THE BIG IDEA

Media Project
Entry Point
Knowledge Harvest
Learning Goals
Learning Activities
Reflective Journaling
Assessment for Learning

Using the learning cycle, students connect their learning over a half term. At the end of each cycle, students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through an Exit Point. (*See additional material such as the wheel of learning and connected curriculum handbook*.)

How is collaborative learning achieved?

Collaboration is hard-wired into every area of The Academy from the design of the learning spaces and vertical tutoring system, right through to how schemes of work, entry points and exit points are designed.

A fundamental feature of teaching, learning and the student experience at The Academy, is the **Learning Set of 6 Students.**

What is a learning set?

Learning sets are groups of 6 students that make up both a teaching group and a house tutor group subsection.

Consisting of mixed ability, gender and background, they are microcosms of The Academy community principle upon which collaborative learning is built.

Students learn to work through establishing working relationships with their peers, which will prepare them for future life as well as supporting their development in The Academy.

The groups rarely change, but may do so for social, emotional and/or academic reasons. Home and away groups are also established in some curriculum areas.

How do you educate the 'whole child'?

There are two elements of the Connected Curriculum that particularly reflect the Sponsor's vision of the education of the whole child. **These are Self-Directed Learning, and Learner Attributes.**

What is Self–Directed Learning?

As part of the holistic approach to the student experience, students have one hour a day four times a week built into their curriculum. Staff support the Self-Directed Learning with an hour a week running a range of activities and experiences for students. Students choose what they want to do and are guided to make decisions based on the areas of **Heart, Body, Mind and Spirit.** Activities may include anything from robot making, knitting, photography, cheerleading, debate, yoga, cooking and entrepreneurship.

What are learner attributes?

Since the development of the whole child is core to our ethos and values, The Academy rewards and assesses pupils based on their development in these areas. The Academy has developed seven learner attributes. These are rewarded via digital badges that students log online. We track and monitor student progress in each area.

What are Superstudios and why are they central to teaching and learning at the **UCL** Academy?

The vision for The **UCL** Academy curriculum puts emphasis on interdisciplinary and problem-based learning and on 'stage-not-age' progression, with students making personal choices to build a curriculum that meets their needs and aspirations.

The Superstudio concept has been developed specifically to support this vision, and it draws upon research into highly successful schools from across the world.

A Superstudio is a group of linked teaching spaces which encourage students to move between activities, to work collaboratively and across disciplines. They bring together traditional classrooms, small and larger seminar rooms and open learning spaces to create a vibrant and dynamic learning space which can accommodate a range of teacher and student-led activity at any one time.

Academy students spend as much as 60% of their learning time working in **Superstudios.** Science, Engineering and Art all benefit from their own Superstudio spaces.

There are five Superstudios in The **UCL** Academy. Superstudios can be used flexibly, grouping students by level, by subject, or by combinations of subjects.

3 What is **my role** in the **House system?**

The Academy is organised around five Houses with every student and member of Academy staff belonging to a House. The House system is a central part of our practice and ethos.

Each House has its own Superstudio space and own canteen areas. Each also has its own designated member of staff acting as Head of House. Houses also have House Principals to support order and discipline across The Academy.

The five Houses in The Academy have been named after constellations in line with the **STEM specialism** of The Academy:

By being part of a House, students become part of a vertical form group, sharing form time and House Time with students from other year groups. As a student belongs to the same household for the duration of their time at The Academy, they build a strong House identity and are provided with on-going academic and pastoral support from those that know them best; tutors, Learning Sets and Heads of House.

Allegiance and pride in one's House is a central part of the ethos and vision of The Academy.

Why is the role of a **form tutor** so important during House Time?

Form tutors are the staff who support students at The Academy the most. Tutors will see their tutees during House Time and are central in ensuring the ethos, vision and values of The Academy are translated into student behaviour and relationships with each other.

Tutors get to know their tutees in a more personal way and play an important role in the life of a student when they first start at The Academy. Each tutor **'inducts'** new students, conveys the ethos of The Academy and initiates the discussion of work. Another important dimension of the tutor's role is as counsellor.

As a matter of routine, tutors should try to help students explore and understand any problems and to decide on a course of action. Support of this kind, at crucial times, reinforces the effective professional relationship on which one depends.

Particularly at the beginning, tutors should try to be well informed so that they can help new students make sense of their new Academy. Tutors and students both need to be aware of the nature of building new relationships. Once a relationship has been established, it is much easier for student and teacher to put a particular problem into perspective.

Students will always be encouraged to reflect throughout their time at The Academy. Throughout the week, students will be expected to spend time reflecting and evaluating their week. Form tutors and teachers will support this process.

Above all, the tutors must not abdicate from embedding the principles of the ethical behaviour policy. Accepting students as individuals does not mean tolerating low standards of behaviour or achievement. Ideally, tutor and class time should help students to help each other, to get to know each other and to do things for other people.

4

How do we **maintain** a **positive** and **calm** learning environment?

We have a highly regarded Academy-wide behaviour policy that is centred around the strongest relationships between students and staff with clear and consistent language habits. Whether it be raising your hand to instruct silence, calmly giving formal warnings, or modelling language and behaviour for learning at all times, staff at The Academy uphold the highest expectations of behaviour, presentation and communication at all times.

What is the Ethical Behaviour Policy?

The Academy's Ethical Behaviour Policy focuses on the rights, responsibilities and duties of all students to support a positive learning environment, which are core to The Academy's day-to-day practices.

It is an expectation that every member of staff understands and supports the principles and processes of the Ethical Behaviour Policy. The Vice-Principals are the overall members of staff responsible for behaviour across The Academy.

All staff are trained in how to support the EBP and record and report accordingly. It is every member of staff's statutory responsibility to follow these processes and practices. Please refer to the EBP, your line manager and the inclusion manager for additional support.

Rewards and Sanctions

All staff and students will be made aware of the clear and rigorous system of rewards and sanctions. The Academy believes firmly in rewarding positive behaviour as a way in which to inspire achievement. However, a clear system of consequences and sanctions are a key part of The Academy's practice. The key process for sanctions is to administer ACS (Academy Community Service).

Rewards will be centred on the awarding of House points (stars) to individuals and groups who show a range of attributes and who achieve notable success in any area of work around The Academy.

Pastoral Care

In order to ensure that students feel they belong within The Academy, each student is part of both a household and a tutor group. Vertical tutor groups encourage individuals to build support networks with older and younger students as well as with their tutor.

Relationships at The Academy

All relationships between members of The Academy community are underpinned by the values and principles of the Ethical Behaviour Policy and The Ethical Framework for Staff. The growth of a friendly relationship, between teacher and student, based on mutual respect, and recognition of the role that each plays in the learning situation is desirable. It is, however, an abuse of this professional relationship for a teacher to:

- Enter into an improper association with a student;
- Engage inappropriately with students through social networking sites;
- Show undue personal favour or disfavour towards a student;
- Commit such acts against a child which are illegal;
- Endeavour to exert an undue influence with regard to personal attitudes, opinions or behaviour which are in no way connected with the work of The Academy.

One of the visions of our Sponsor is for **UCL** Academy to strive to provide students with the best possible **STEM** experience within school, not only in London but nationally and internationally.

Our aim is to prepare students for challenges, and to solve problems that don't even exist yet.

We believe that coupling high-quality education in **Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths**, and encounters with excellence leads to world class **STEM** education. These encounters are usually facilitated by our links with **University College London** (**UCL**), through our **UCL Lecture Series**, and high-quality internships with leading industries and businesses, such as Bechtel and Atkins Global.

We believe in total equality of opportunity for all people in **STEM**. For example, historically, Engineering and Computer Science have had a smaller uptake from girls than boys. In our self-directed curriculum we have the opportunity to study **"learning to code"** for girls. We hope these opportunities will ensure a strong and equal cohort of **STEM** literate students with a goal to change the world.

Level 3 at The **UCL** Academy specialises in **STEM** (**Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics**) subjects. Most students have a strong STEM bias in their subject choices at Level 3.
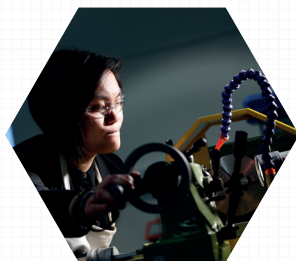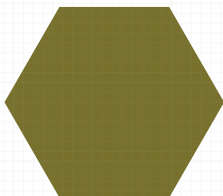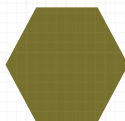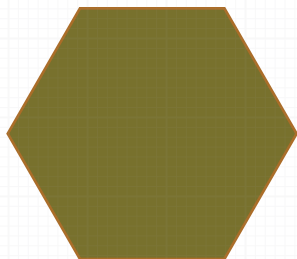
UCL work closely with The Academy at developing an exciting, cutting-edge, hands-on approach to the teaching of mathematics and science. Teaching encourages students to put their theoretical knowledge to use in designing experiments and coming up with solutions to 'real world' problems. The Academy will has a state-of-the-art facilities for the teaching of science, including a science demonstration theatre which allows **UCL** academics and **UCL** Academy staff to stage interactive experiments.

Students also regularly have the opportunity to visit laboratories at the University.

Our **UCL** sponsors expect The Academy to become a centre of excellence for the teaching of mathematics and science, and to develop innovative approaches to the curriculum, including through the use of new technologies.

The **UCL** Academy is also pioneering the teaching of 'engineering science', bringing together the design and technology curriculum, some elements of the physics curriculum and the proposed engineering diploma qualification to give students an understanding of what 'engineering' is about in industry and at university-level study. For further details of this please refer to the STEM pages of this website.

6 How do we **work** with **our sponsor** and **external partners**?

Who is the Governing Body?

The Governing Body of the **UCL** Academy is committed to working closely with the **Principal, SLT** and members of staff at The Academy in ensuring that the ethos and vision of the Sponsor is prevalent throughout the **UCL** Academy.

The Chair of Governors is **Professor David Price** – Vice Provost of **UCL**. The board has a range of **UCL**, parent and community governors as well as staff governors. A full list is available on the website and is updated accordingly.

The role of the Governors and Sponsor will also be central to ensuring that The **UCL** Academy has outstanding leadership and management at every level.

How do we work with **UCL**?

The relationship with our sponsor, **UCL**, is embedded into the DNA of The Academy. Our highly regarded Connected Curriculum uses **UCL**'s Grand Challenges to teach specialised subject knowledge and skills around a robust interdisciplinary framework.

Our focus on internationalism through the curriculum content, international visits and guests and teaching of Mandarin to all students, ensures global citizenship is as central to our ethos as it is to **UCL**.

The Academy's commitment to educating the whole child in an environment where respect, diversity and tolerance are part of everyday practice, are firmly built on the values of Jeremy Bentham and principles of **UCL'**s education vision.

There are many examples of UCL working with The Academy on a day-to-day basis:

| Guest Lecture Series

Each year academics from across **UCL** visit The Academy to deliver subject-specific lectures in a range of disciplines. The lecture series is designed to support, enrich and extend students' subject knowledge. Previous lectures have included 'The Search for Life on Mars', 'Dracula and Victorian Society' and 'How Buildings Affect Our Lives' which offered an analysis of the similarities of the architecture of The **UCL** Academy and Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

| Learning Companions

UCL undergraduates volunteer as 'Learning Companions' during lesson time and help to stretch and challenge Academy students academically. With the support of Learning Companions, Academy students benefit from:

- Focused, subject specific one-to-one support;
- Wider reading workshops with tailor-made reading lists;
- Opportunities for conversations in Mandarin and Spanish.

Lectures are held on Thursday afternoons and are open to all students and teachers at The Academy.

Student Societies

UCL student groups and societies volunteer at The Academy throughout the year. This includes:

- Sports societies such as netball, badminton and wall-ball;
- Musical Theatre society helping with the UCL Academy musical;
- Model United Nations society and other student groups supporting Self-Directed Learning activities.

Mentoring

UCL Academy Mentoring is a project run in partnership with the charity Brightside. All **Level 1** and **Level 3** students are matched with a **UCL** student mentor and take part in online mentoring and face to-face meetups.

Mentors help students build confidence, develop skills and explore options for upcoming decisions.

Work Experience

UCL offers an exciting work experience programme for **Level 3** students at The Academy. Taking place in July, this programme offers Academy students the chance to spend a week shadowing a department at **UCL**. This is a great opportunity for students to gain insight into **UCL** and to build work-related skills.

UCL Academy staff are encouraged to utilise the expertise of **UCL** in order to extend their subject knowledge and actively engage with research.

The partnership supports **UCL**'s commitment to being a publicly engaged institution with an interest in the education of London students.

7 How does The **Academy** support professional development?

We aim to ensure that all staff members are adequately trained and their skills developed in order to secure effectiveness and efficiency, sustain job satisfaction and maintain a work-life balance.

The vision of The Academy is to give all staff the skills and opportunity to develop themselves professionally. We have a very well recognised and comprehensive approach to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) that combines a personal approach to development as well as giving significant time and opportunity to collaborate and develop personal practice. Please see The Academy CPL handbook for more information.

Staff development and in-service courses

The Academy will provide staff development opportunities every Tuesday between 15.30 and 17.30. CPD will be a key part of The Academy's strategic work and The Academy will work closely with its Sponsor and key educational partners to ensure that academic action-based research, opportunities to carry out MA, MPhils and other academic programs are central to all the work that The Academy does.

The member of staff responsible for CPD will play a key role in the strategic development of The Academy and its staff. There will be a range of in-services courses and programs available to staff.

Trainee Teacher Development

The Academy will help support, train and develop trainee teachers to enter education. Trainee teachers working at The Academy will receive a full program of teacher development and be given a range of opportunities to develop their professional practice.

Leadership and management

The **UCL** Academy recognises the critical role that leadership and management play in every area of Academy life. The staff structure reflects this by placing key leaders on the leadership pay spine.

Performance management

Performance management reviews are provided on an annual basis for all members of staff at The Academy, except for those on contracts of less than one term, those undergoing an induction or probationary period and those who are subject to The Academy's capability procedure.

Performance management in The Academy will be a supportive and developmental process designed to ensure that all members of staff have the skills and support they need to carry out their role effectively. It will help to ensure that members of staff are able to continue to improve their professional practice and to develop in their roles.

Notes

The
UCL Academy