



Candidate Pack

UCL Academy | Swiss Cottage,
Camden



A letter from the Co-Principals

Dear Candidate

Thank you for your interest in The UCL Academy. We are pleased to have this opportunity to give you some details about our Academy and to describe the kind of person we hope to appoint.

The Academy opened in the autumn term of 2012 with 180 students in Year 7 and 125 students in Year 12. The Academy reached its full capacity of 1150 students by the autumn term of 2016. The Academy's cohort is in the top quintile nationally for each of: students from disadvantaged backgrounds, with SEND, and with EAL. With our first set of 'A' Level results in August 2014, we are the second highest performing school in Camden for attainment and value added with 75% of our students going on to study at Russell Group Universities. For GCSE, progress for our first cohort was within the top 30% of schools nationally, with disadvantaged students achieving more strongly than others, bucking the national trend.

Working with our Sponsor, University College London, we have built an inspiring Academy which supports young people to develop as learners, and as 'whole people'. The UCL Academy is an exciting, stimulating place to learn, with a curriculum which focuses on problem-solving, skills development and 'real world' issues. Our core aim is to provide the highest quality teaching in a first-rate learning environment, encouraging all students to be happy and to strive to be the very best. In June 2016, Ofsted judged us to be 'Good' in all areas with some outstanding features.

Key elements of the vision of The UCL Academy are:

- Ensuring that students experience a transformational curriculum and pedagogy;
- Ensuring that the systems, cultures and standards support excellence;
- Contributing to the system as an internationally acclaimed training institution;
- Ensuring that meaningful networks support a coherent learning journey.

This is an exciting opportunity for an outstanding, ambitious leader who is seeking to demonstrate that they are an inspirational role model for research-informed teaching, lifelong learning, a commitment to the education of the whole person and education for the common good.


The successful candidate will work alongside the Co-Principals, the sponsor and Governors to embed an exciting curriculum, to lead outstanding practice in teaching and learning, and ensure the systems that support these are truly effective.

If you are someone with passion, expertise and vision we offer an opportunity to work in partnership with one of the world's leading universities at a ground-breaking school.

I hope you are as excited by this opportunity as we are, as this is a challenging yet immensely rewarding opportunity.



Simon McBride
Co-Principal
The UCL Academy



Robin Street
Co-Principal
The UCL Academy



About the Sponsor

UCL is one of the top universities in the UK, and one of the top 25 universities in the world. It has extensive, world-class facilities and employs some of the world's leading academics. Sponsorship of an Academy allows us to make those facilities and that expertise available on a formal basis to secondary school students: as a means of extending the traditional curriculum, providing access to new ways of learning and promoting the principle of 'lifelong learning' from a young age. We believe that this supports students of all ability levels to higher levels of attainment and enthusiasm for further study.

UCL was founded in 1826 to provide equality of education for all, and the UCL Academy is a school which supports each and every child to succeed. To this end, UCL will use its extensive resources to support the Academy to raise students' aspirations and to invigorate the secondary curriculum. In particular, the school's science and mathematics specialisms allows us to draw on UCL's own scientific strengths to bridge the gap between secondary and higher education in those subjects.

Students at the UCL Academy benefit from a programme of masterclasses, seminars and summer schools, given by UCL staff and making use of UCL's laboratory, library and other teaching facilities. These are designed to build on the teaching undertaken in class and help to extend students' understanding of core topics. They also help to prepare older students for the transition between school and university teaching.

Additionally, UCL's students support the Academy: well-established networks of UCL student mentors and tutors provide practical and classroom support to Academy students, acting as role models, classroom assistants and sources of informal advice and guidance.

Finally, the Academy acts as a hub to support education across Camden more broadly. UCL has a long tradition of collaboration with schools in Camden, and the Academy is a base from which UCL is able to extend the support it currently provides to these schools. We are strongly committed to ensuring that the Academy makes a genuine contribution to the Camden family of schools.



The UCL Academy is co-located with Swiss Cottage Specialist SEN School, which is also accommodated in new buildings. The school merged with Jack Taylor Special School in 2012 to form one of the largest specialist SEN schools in the country, with around 230 students from 2-19, catering for the full spectrum of special education needs, including children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Although the Academy and Swiss Cottage are not formally linked, UCL considers that the co-location to be a tremendous benefit to the Academy, and the relationship between the two schools is an important part of the vision for the Academy. The Swiss Cottage buildings house a Research Institute which support collaboration between staff at Swiss Cottage, UCL's neuroscientists and educational psychologists and, potentially, the Academy as well.

The education vision for the school is the product of wide consultation and research. UCL explored models from around the world – looking both at pedagogy and teaching spaces – and has developed its ideas following consultation with its academic staff, colleagues who work closely with schools in the secondary sector, and with our Careers and Library Services. We have built on our experience of students joining us as undergraduates and sought to identify ways of aligning practice in the secondary and tertiary sectors more closely. We have also benefited from the expertise of a number of educational consultants and practicing teachers.



How does the Academy operate?

The UCL Academy offers a highly personalised model of education in which students have a considerable degree of choice over the programmes they study, and personal responsibility for managing their time and their progress.

The Academy's Connected Curriculum, developed using the International Middle Year Curriculum (IMYC), emphasises specialist subject teaching within a broadly thematic framework. These themes act as a thread running through all areas of a student's learning which are then applied to a range of subjects and concepts.

A key element of the Connected Curriculum and the Sponsor's vision for the education of the whole person is the Self-Directed Curriculum. The Lower School programme of compulsory extra-curricular activities incorporates sports, performing arts, community activity and creative pursuits. Students are encouraged to treat these activities as part of their school timetable and activities are co-ordinated as part of the school's extended day.

The Academy working week is divided into approximately 13-14 two hour blocks across a week.

Foundation Level

In their first year at the school, Academy students are supported to adapt to the unique learning environment, and to prepare themselves to take on responsibility for their own development programme. English plays a key role at this level, alongside Mathematics, Science and a modern foreign language. Every student develops and consolidate the literary and numeracy skills they will need for future study, including through cross-curricular projects.

Levels 1-3:

Each year, all students working at Levels 1 and 2 take courses in mathematics, sciences and at least one modern foreign language. They also select a number of additional courses to construct a full programme of study, depending on their interests, aptitudes and ambitions. All courses are completed within a year, with formal external accreditation at the end of the course wherever appropriate.

Staff at the Academy are encouraged to explore innovative ways of delivering course content, including through interdisciplinary, problem-based scenarios and team-teaching.



The Academy building: supporting the education vision

The UCL Academy is housed in brand-new, purpose-built accommodation on Adelaide Road in Swiss Cottage, North London.

The new buildings have specifically designed to support the curriculum and pastoral structures that the school will offer.

The Academy's facilities include:

- state-of-the-art science laboratories, and a science demonstration theatre for interactive lectures, experiments and talks by visiting academics from UCL;
- an engineering science suite, which include workshops and technology and science labs (for electronics and for engineering physics) designed to give students the experience of 'being engineers';
- suites of rooms for art, music and drama, including highly-equipped performance spaces;
- 'House' spaces, providing comfortable, welcoming places for students to eat together, and to use for informal study during breaks and before and after school;

Around 60% of the teaching in the UCL Academy takes place in 'Superstudios'. 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 space to create a vibrant and dynamic learning area which can accommodate a range of teacher and student-led activity at any one time.

The UCL Academy curriculum puts emphasis on interdisciplinary and problem-based learning works, 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.

The superstudios are zoned by faculty area and allow flexibility for teams of teachers to use the classrooms and open learning spaces as they see fit. They also allow us to zone the spaces by age group or level should the need arise.

The Superstudios accommodate all teaching not requiring specialist equipment and most theory-based teaching for subjects which have a practical element.

School specialisms

The Academy has formal specialisms in science and mathematics, with a commitment to providing an 'education for global citizenship' which places a particular premium on modern foreign language learning.

The specialisms reflect the sponsor's desire to support curriculum innovation in science and mathematics, with a view to ensuring that students at all levels develop numeracy skills and scientific understanding appropriate to their future aspirations and to the 21st century context in which they live and work. UCL has extensive scientific and mathematics expertise, and is at the leading edge of scientific research; this enables considerable academic input into the development of exciting, up-to-date and relevant scientific curricula for all students. Additionally, UCL has a strong local reputation for the support of mathematics teaching in schools; this support will be further developed, using the Academy as a hub to raise standards in mathematics teaching and learning across the borough. UCL also works with the Academy to ensure that the school benefits from access to UCL's physical resources (e.g. laboratories, scientific collections) as appropriate.

The Academy's specialisms complement existing expertise in the Camden family of schools.

Pastoral

As part of the mentoring system which forms the basis of the school's pastoral support structure, students have regular contact with their older peers and with students from UCL, many of whom come from schools and communities within London. These older teenagers will be role models for younger students, providing opportunities for them to discuss problems with those closer to them in age, and to come into regular contact with young people for whom school has led to further study post-16 and at university. These relationships help to support students who might otherwise be disengaged from learning. The Academy staff are particularly sensitive to the needs of students with mental health and emotional difficulties, and seek to identify issues at an early stage and put together appropriate support packages, tailored to the individual child. Additionally, the school has designated and appropriately equipped a separate space for those students whose emotional or behavioural needs may require them to be removed from their learning community for a substantial number of regular sessions each week over an extended period of time. This enables specialist Academy staff to work in a targeted way with these young people, nurturing their emotional and social development with the aim of addressing issues which might otherwise result in exclusion.

The school is fully accessible to students with physical disabilities. Learning support activities is delivered alongside other curriculum courses, so that students receiving additional help in key areas are not isolated or stigmatised. Students deemed to be underperforming are monitored discretely, with a view to ensuring early intervention with tailored support as appropriate.

A significant proportion of the Academy's students require EAL support. Many of these are 'advanced bilingual' learners, with a need for targeted help to develop their ability to use English at the highest conceptual level, as a tool with which to reason and develop ideas and arguments. The Academy employs an EAL teacher, within the inclusion team, to work directly with these students.

In line with the school's commitment to modern foreign languages, basic EAL tuition and work with more advanced ESL speakers are accommodated within MFL-designated slots in the timetable, and every effort is made to remove the perceived distinction between EAL and MFL in the way the subjects are presented and promoted across the school. Where appropriate, EAL resource is targeted at students in the Foundation Year to provide intensive booster sessions and after-school support.



Principles and strategies to supporting UCL Academy staff's work/life balance.

Since the Academy opened in 2012, we have evolved and adapted how we support staff well being at the Academy. We remain deeply committed to our ambitious and exciting vision for education at the same time as recognising that an inspired, creative and cared for staff body are central to delivering this vision.

Outlined below are the key principles and current strategies in place at the Academy to support this work. We continue to work with the staff association, the staffing committee, our Sponsor and the NEU to explore and implement further systems and strategies to support all staff at the Academy.

Flexible working hours and additional holidays

- The school day: twice per week teachers have a "Blanking Code" on their timetables to allow them to come in later if they have a free period in a morning, or leave earlier in the afternoon. Nevertheless, on days when there are no scheduled activities or meetings beyond 3.35pm there is no requirement to stay.
- Parent Consultation Evenings take place from 4.00-6.30pm according to a published schedule. Because this goes on later in the evening, the Academy has a later start for all the following day.
- The Academy operates more planning days during the academic year than Local Authority Schools. It has approximately 8 per year to allow time for collaborative planning for staff as well as induction at the beginning of the year. The Academy has also introduced a longer Autumn Half Term, and has flexibility to add additional planning time if needed.

Sensitive and pragmatic approach to planning time and administrative expectations.

- Marking requirements are that there is a productive process of written feedback with students that each faculty has designed according to their requirements, at least every 3 weeks. It is for teachers to plan when they undertake this.
- Data input and reporting processes have been designed to ensure robust assessment processes are combined with pragmatic and minimal data inputting requirements.
- Staff planning days are carefully planned and organised to support staff planning time as well as CPL delivery.

Exceptional training and development

CPL is co-constructed with staff to support school strategic priorities as well as ensuring staff's self identified professional areas of interest in terms of pedagogy and subject specialism, are effectively supported through our unique partnership with UCL IOE.

On Tuesdays staff CPL takes place from 3.45-5.30pm. On one other day per week for a minimum of a 10 week block in 1 term of the year, each teacher will offer a session of Self Directed Learning of their choosing. In recognition of these additional activities, staff are paid an additional £1500 in their salary on top of their position on the pay spine. Where departmental or other meetings take place our commitment is never to go beyond 5.30pm.



Enjoyment and collaboration

- The Academy has an annual awards ceremony (The Golden Lanyards) for staff where peers nominate each other and have the opportunity to write comments and celebrate colleagues professional and personal support for each other.
- Staff yoga is provided weekly and a private healthcare plan is also provided for all staff. Staff organise additional sporting and cultural events such as staff football, tennis and staff trips to the opera with the ENO.
- Staff socials and initiatives, such as a Christmas party and cultural events, are supported and encouraged by SLT and Sponsor.

Finance and Travel support and incentives

- Travel: the Academy is 2 minutes walk from Swiss Cottage underground station and is in close proximity (by tube) to King's Cross, Baker Street and London Bridge station. Season ticket loans are available for all staff.
- Pay scales match the national scales, remembering the additional £1500 on top of that.
- A personal health care plan for all staff that includes free counselling, gym membership discounts and money back on holistic therapies and prescriptions.

Community Support

The Academy is organised around 5 Houses with every student and member of staff belonging to a House. Each House has its own superstudio and canteen to encourage community and regular inter-House competitions to promote House identity and pride.

The Academy operates a full programme of compulsory extra-curricular activities for students of all ages, which include sports, performing arts, community activity and creative pursuits. Students are encouraged to treat these activities as part of their school timetable (i.e. part of their learning programme) and activities are co-ordinated as part of the school's normal working day.

The Academy also serves as a hub for the university's outreach activity in Camden, providing a venue and facilities for lectures and masterclasses in a range of activities which are open to students at all Camden schools.

The UCL Academy operates a volunteering programme and all students are encouraged to regularly participate in projects in their community. The school also provide a venue for adult learning, and the Academy's facilities are available to the local community according to need.