Communities of Practice at UCL
Communities of Practice at UCL

- Overview of objectives: why
- Definition: what
- Process: how
- Evaluation and impact—so what
Academic excellence is where we excel.

- 29 Nobel laureates
- 11 academic faculties
- 42,100 students
- 13,360 employees
- 1st in UK for research strength
- 440 undergraduate programmes
- 150+ nationalities represented by student body
- 675 postgraduate programmes
Why: Overview of UCL today

- Isolation
- Fragmentation of roles
- Departments conducting the **same work in different ways**
- Overlapping areas and duplication of work
- Bureaucracy, workarounds and a lack of autonomy
- Slow response times
- Unmanageable **workloads**
- IT systems not suited to policy or vice versa
- Wasted time and effort to get simple things done causes **frustration**
- Uncertainty about workflows

- Staff networks
- Staff forums
- Working groups
- Interest groups
- Committees
- Specialist meetings
- Conferences
- Training and events
What if...

- Share knowledge and practices
- Staff had **a shared vision of excellence**
- Staff felt empowered to **continually improve and innovate**
- Staff knew where and how to direct innovative ideas
- Staff and **their ideas were supported by a Senior Sponsor** and integrated in UCL’s strategies
- There was a **clear pathway for career development**
- Training provision was aligned to the needs of practice areas
Communities of Practice aim to **unite professional staff**, as **practitioners**, to be:

- **Aligned**
- **Engaged**
- **Empowered**

The project contributes to all three of TOPS’ aims with a particular focus on aims:

1) More **effective services** and a **more satisfied UCL community** and
2) More **fulfilling careers for staff**
A community of practice is a group of people who perform similar functions and share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.  

(Wenger-Trayner, 1996)
Communities of Practice: Background

- Emerged from the apprenticeship model
- Informed by the social learning theory
- Seen as the social capital of organisations
Changing the way we work…

From silos…
To sharing knowledge
To solving shared problems
To using collective knowledge of the community to create better practices
To gaining a collective vision of excellence
From silos to cross-collaboration

- Top-down hierarchy
- Bureaucracy
- Detailed instruction
- Silos

Quick changes, flexible resources
“Boxes and lines” less important, focus on action

Leadership shows direction and enables action
Teams built around end-to-end accountability

McKinsey&Company
**UCL CoP Model**

**Sponsor**
- SMT member
- Provides top-level recognition for the community by ensuring exposure, support and strategic visibility.

**Alignment**
- Key stakeholders
- Wider members
- CoP Core members

**Championing**
- Projects (self-selected and supported by the Sponsor)
- Activities (share good-practice, new ideas)
Community of practice set up process

Set up
- Sponsor identified
- CoP area established
- Practice area articulated
- Core members identified and selected
- Workshop dates agreed
- Preparation collected
- Workshops delivered
- Community launched

Iterative
- Focus workshop delivered
- Vision workshop delivered
- Action workshop delivered
- Community events commence
- Work streams commence
- Community launched
- Terms of reference agreed
- CoP Leaders appointed
- Community impact evaluated

Agreement

Contracting

Delivery
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service area</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Community of practice</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications and Marketing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Student recruitment</td>
<td>Running</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications and Marketing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Digital communications</td>
<td>Running</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications and Marketing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Internal communications</td>
<td>Running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications and Marketing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Events management</td>
<td>Running</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>Running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Project and programme management</td>
<td>Running</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Data and insight</td>
<td>Running</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Registry Support</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Access &amp; Widening Participation</td>
<td>Preparing to launch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Registry Support</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Student Health and Wellbeing</td>
<td>Running</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estates</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Facilities Management</td>
<td>Preparing to launch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Support Technicians</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Research IT</td>
<td>Preparing to launch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Support Technicians</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Preparing to launch</td>
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Current UCL CoPs
- 17 CoPs
- 1500+ members
- 120+ events
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<tr>
<td>Student Registry Support</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Programme Administration (Teaching)</td>
<td>Preparing to launch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>Preparing to launch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Procurement and Purchasing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Support</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Pre-Award Management</td>
<td>Preparing to launch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Set-up process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Learning and Development</td>
<td>In preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Support</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Post-Award Management</td>
<td>In preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Services</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>IT Development and Implementation</td>
<td>In preparation</td>
</tr>
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Future UCL CoPs
So what: Evaluating impact of CoPs at UCL

Individual → Institutional
As a result of being part of the CoP, how would you rate the difference it has made to:

1=No difference at all  5=Significant difference

- 61% Gaining an increased sense of professional identity
- 63% Gaining service alignment between different areas across
- 70% Gaining a collective vision of excellence
- 71% Improving communication between different areas
- 72% Raising awareness about where, and who to go to, for resources and info
- 72% Gaining an increased sense of belonging and alignment to UCL
- 77% Sharing resources, information, experiences
- 81% Generating new ideas and solving problems

Annual Survey 2019
In what way has being part of CoPs influenced your day-to-day job?

Which areas have been most influenced?

- Working collaboratively and making connections: 69%
- Contributing to operational changes at UCL: 52%
- Approach to your work: 42%
- Decision making or changes in your department: 37%
- Relationship with your manager: 16%

Positively 26.3% 70.5%
No influence 3.2%
Negatively 0%
In what way has being part of CoPs influenced your day-to-day job?

**Positively**
- I am more engaged
- I feel am contributing to the operational changes at UCL
- Bringing knowledge from other areas back to my department
- Being able to align our departmental priorities with wider UCL
- Learn best practice and implement in my job
- Working collaboratively across UCL; locating people and resources
- Process-fixing and finding faster solutions
- Better communication
- Excellent connections
- Shared ownership
- More motivated and less isolated.

**Negatively**
- Time commitment
- Balancing the work-load
- Split loyalty between day-to-day and CoP
- Pressure from line manager
- Insufficient engagement in the projects
Can you identify to which UCL 2034 Strategy Key Enablers your CoP project might align to?

70% Yes

- Delivering excellent systems and processes in support of UCL's vision: 62.5%
- Giving our students best support, facilities and opportunities: 35.4%
- Communicating and engaging with the world: 33.3%
- Valuing our staff and delivering on equality and diversity: 31.3%
- Maintaining a sustainable estate to meet our aspirations: 10.4%
- Financing our ambitions: 6.3%
Service delivery – satisfaction levels before, in general and after joining a CoP

- Before joining a CoP: 41%
- In general: 47%
- After joining a CoP: 64%
Next Steps: CoP Integration into Business as Usual

- Give every staff the opportunity to be part of a CoP
- Full integration in the whole employee lifecycle
- From recruitment to inductions and appraisals
- Links with professional development objectives and talent retention
- Incorporate recognition into work objectives or job descriptions
- Integration with Career Pathways and Ways of Working

UCL Communities of Practice win UHR Award 2019

For the best organisational development and culture change initiative
Motivations for being part of Communities of Practice

“We find faster solutions by working collaboratively”

I believe, unlike other UCL initiatives, this will have a positive impact and I have a chance to influence institutional change.

Working with people across the University who I would never have had the chance to work with otherwise.

The most rewarding things are the energy, commitment and passion of the project leads and members, and their willingness to tackle challenges.

“I am able to align our departmental priorities with wider UCL”

The CoP motivates me; the members have a lot of energy and want to make things happen and see tangible results.

Video
Thank you

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