



Brief for the appointment of

Chair of Council

March 2026

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Introduction from the Vice-Chair of Council



Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chair of Council at University College London. UCL is a university of real consequence, shaping ideas, discoveries and public life on a global scale. Its influence reaches far beyond London, and its work touches every major challenge facing society today.

You would be joining the university at an extraordinary point in its history. In 2026, UCL marks its 200th anniversary, celebrating two centuries of pioneering openness, inclusion and academic ambition. This bicentenary is not only a moment of pride, but a launchpad for UCL's next century. The university faces both significant challenges and opportunities, from financial and regulatory pressures to new prospects for innovation, partnership and global impact, including the transformative potential of new technologies and artificial intelligence, which will shape how UCL teaches, researches and operates in the years ahead. It is a moment that calls for strong governance, clear judgment and confident leadership.

As Chair of Council, you will help steer UCL through this defining period. You will guide Council in providing strategic oversight, thoughtful challenge and assurance, ensuring the university remains well governed and well positioned for the future. Equally important, you will act as a critical friend to the President and Provost, offering constructive counsel, support and perspective. This relationship is central to UCL's success, enabling the Executive to pursue bold ideas with confidence, accountability and a shared sense of purpose.

This role offers a rare chance to shape the future of a global university at a moment when its mission, values and impact truly matter. I am delighted that you are considering this opportunity, and I look forward to receiving your application.

Dominic Blakemore
*Vice-Chair of Council and
Chair of the Search Committee*

About University College London (UCL)

Since its founding in 1826, UCL has challenged orthodoxy and embraced a bold, progressive vision for higher education.

Created to widen access and driven by a commitment to generating and applying *useful* knowledge, the university has consistently applied itself to improving the world, fostering interdisciplinary enquiry and shaping public debate. As it marks its bicentenary under the banner of UCL200, UCL remains energised by the entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to equity and justice that inspired its origins.

Today, UCL is recognised as one of the world's leading universities, known for broad disciplinary excellence across research, innovation, education and societal impact. Operating at significant scale, with a diverse and globally engaged student community, UCL continues to deliver academic performance that has few parallels internationally. Its research strength, global partnerships and ability to convene expertise across disciplines enable the university to address complex global challenges with imagination and rigour.

UCL is also a major contributor to London and to the UK more widely, generating close to £10bn of economic impact each year. Its campuses – from historic Bloomsbury to the innovation-driven UCL East – strengthen London's status as a global centre of knowledge, creativity and discovery,

while its collaborations with industry, government, charities and cultural institutions create benefit far beyond the academic sphere.

In all its work, UCL continues to demonstrate a commitment to openness, ambition and public purpose. As it enters its third century, the university remains dedicated to questioning the status quo, advancing knowledge that improves lives and preparing future generations to create positive and lasting change.

Further information

www.ucl.ac.uk/about/

UCL Strategy: www.ucl.ac.uk/about/leadership/strategy

UCL 2034: www.ucl.ac.uk/about/leadership/strategy/ucl-2034

Finance and Reporting: www.ucl.ac.uk/about/leadership/finance-and-reporting



Role of the Chair of UCL Council

Leadership

- The Chair is responsible for the leadership of Council, and for ensuring that the necessary business of Council is carried out efficiently, effectively, and in a manner appropriate for the proper conduct of business.
- The Chair should ensure, through a good working relationship with the Chairs of the Committees of Council that Committee business is carried on in a proper manner, efficiently and effectively, and that regular and satisfactory reports are presented to Council.
- The Chair should ensure that Council acts in accordance with the instruments of governance of UCL (i.e. the Charter, Statutes and Regulations for Management) and with UCL's internal rules and regulations, and should seek advice from the Secretary to Council in any case of uncertainty.
- The Chair should ensure that Council exercises collective responsibility, that is to say, that decisions are taken corporately by members acting as a body. The Chair will encourage all members to work together effectively, contributing their skills and expertise as appropriate, and will seek to build consensus among them.

- The Chair should agree and implement arrangements for the appraisal/review of the performance of individual members of Council. The Chair may encourage members to participate in appropriate training events such as those organised by Advance HE.
- The Chair will be formally and informally involved in the process for the recruitment of new Appointed members of Council with a view to achieving a balance of relevant expertise across Council as a whole.
- The Chair will be responsible for the appraisal/review of the performance of the Provost, and will make recommendations to the Remuneration Committee accordingly.

Standards

- The Chair shall be responsible for ensuring that Council conducts itself in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- The Chair shall ensure that the Secretary to Council maintains an up-to-date Register of Interests of members of Council, in order that the integrity of Council business shall be and shall be seen to be maintained, and shall make a full and timely personal disclosure.
- The Chair shall be responsible for ensuring that Council exercises efficient and effective use of the resources of UCL for the furtherance of its charitable purposes, maintains its long-term financial viability, and safeguards its assets, and that proper mechanisms exist to ensure financial control and for the prevention of fraud.





Business of UCL

- The Chair is responsible for ensuring that Council exercises control over the strategic direction of UCL and that the performance of UCL is adequately assessed against the objectives which Council has approved.
- The Chair should at all times act in accordance with established protocols for the use of delegated authority or Chair's Action (Statute 9). All instances of the use of delegated authority or Chair's Action should be reported to the next meeting of Council.

- The Chair should endeavour to establish a constructive and supportive but challenging working relationship with the Provost, recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management, and avoiding involvement in the day-to-day executive management of UCL.

External role

- The Chair will represent Council externally, in consultation with the Provost and senior officers of UCL as the Chair sees fit, including as a member of the Committee of University Chairs.

The Person

The Chair of Council will bring the experience, judgement and personal qualities required to lead UCL's governing body with authority and integrity.

Experience and Leadership

- Significant board-level experience in complex organisations.
- A strong understanding of governance, with an appreciation of the distinction between governance and executive management.
- Proven ability to lead, guide and support a diverse governing body, with strong chairing and negotiation skills.

Values and Personal Qualities

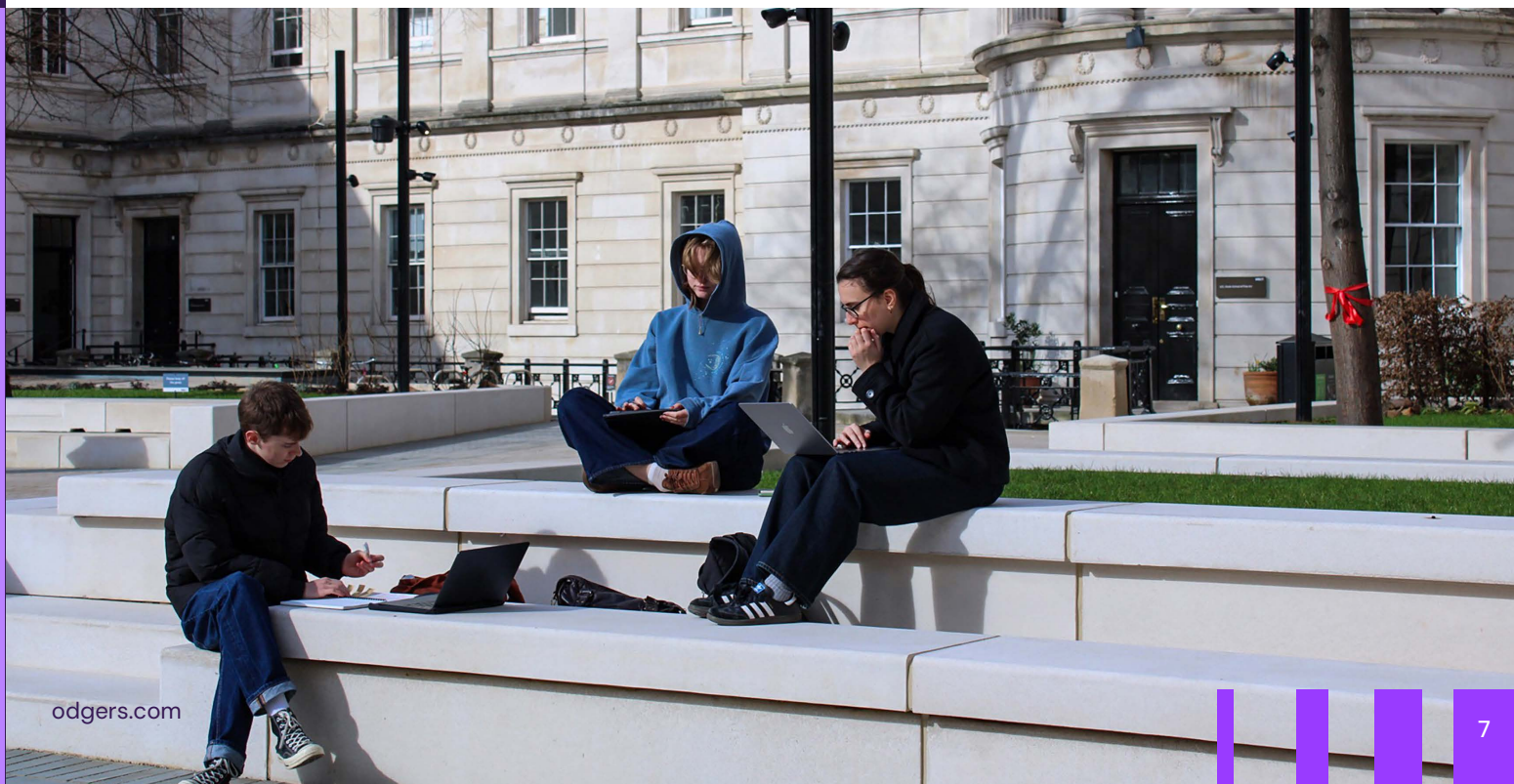
- A deep personal commitment to higher education and to UCL's values and long-term objectives.
- A strong commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Independence, objectivity and sound judgement, with the ability to act impartially and maintain confidentiality.
- An empathetic understanding of the student experience and respect for academic freedom.

Engagement and Representation

- Ability to operate effectively within a collegial academic culture, supporting robust discussion and evidence-based decision-making.
- Strong relationship-building skills, with experience engaging a wide range of stakeholders across sectors.
- Excellent communication and ambassadorial skills, with the credibility to represent UCL nationally and internationally.

Commitment to the Role

- Consistent attendance at Council and committee meetings, with full preparation and active contribution.
- Sufficient time, capacity and resilience to undertake the full breadth of the role.



UCL Council

As UCL's governing body, the Council oversees the management and administration of UCL and the conduct of its affairs, subject to the advice of the Academic Board on matters of academic policy.

Council approves UCL's mission and strategic vision and its long-term academic and business plans. Council delegates authority to the Provost, as chief executive, for the academic, corporate, financial, estate and human resources management of UCL. The Council normally meets six times each year and holds an annual strategic away day.

Council membership: www.ucl.ac.uk/about/leadership/governance/committees/council-and-committees/council/membership

Scheduled meeting dates: www.ucl.ac.uk/about/leadership/governance/committees/council-and-committees/council#dates

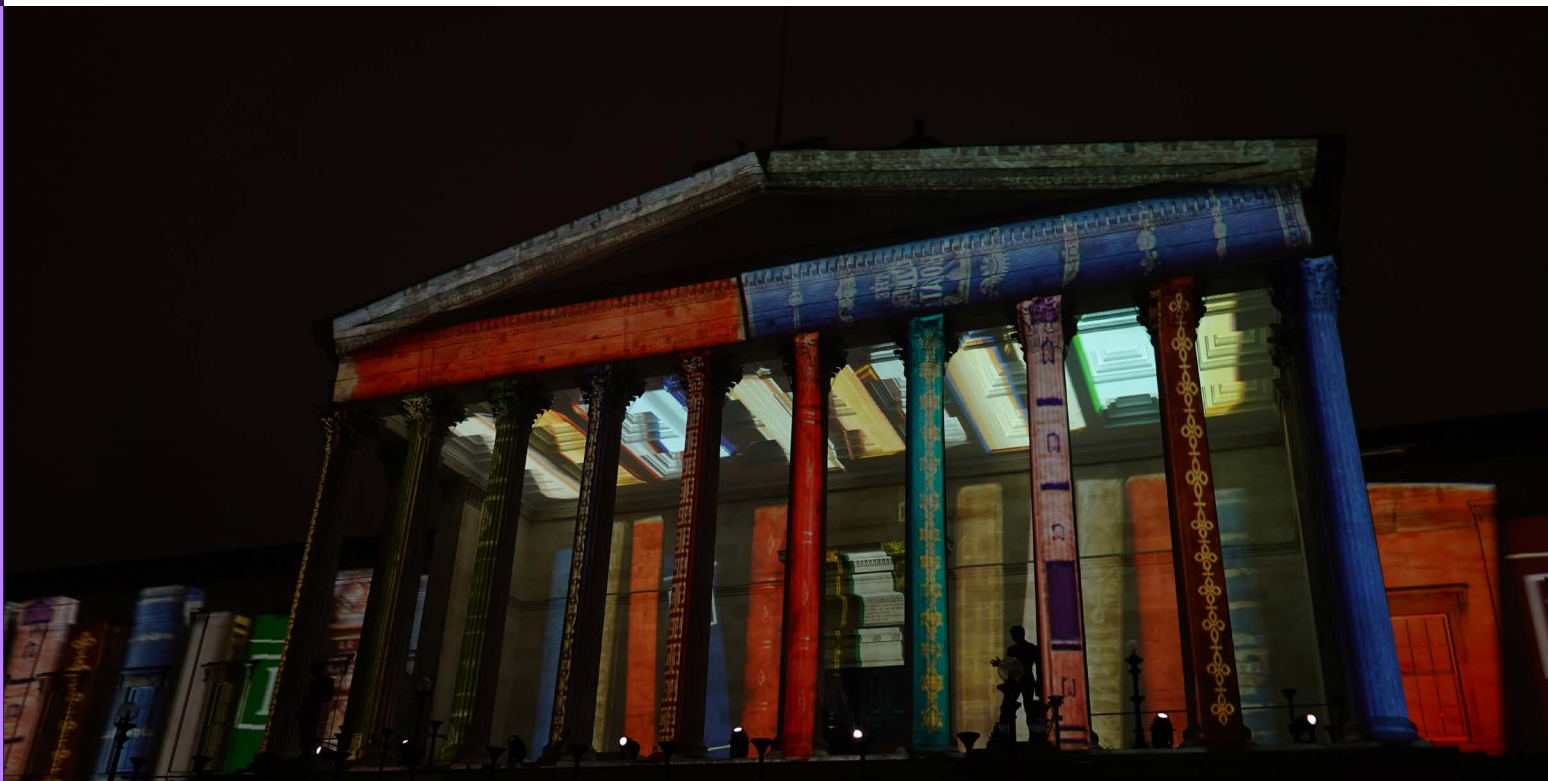
Meeting minutes: www.ucl.ac.uk/about/leadership/governance/committees/council-and-committees/council#minutes

Further information:

The anticipated time commitment for the Chair is c.6 days a month. Additional time may be required during periods of peak activity. Conversely, the time commitment typically reduces during the main vacation periods.

UCL recognises the significant personal contribution made by the Chair and will discuss with candidates any practical support required to enable them to carry out their duties effectively.

It is expected that the new Chair will take up the post in August 2027. It is anticipated that the incoming Chair will join Council during 2026, ahead of formally stepping into the role. The timings are open to discussion.



Application Process

UCL has engaged the services of Odgers, to whom applications should be sent to no later than **Monday 13 April 2026**.

The Selection Committee will meet to agree the short list of candidates and will conduct interviews in **May**.

Informal conversations are expected to take place both **w/c 4th and w/c 13th May 2026** (at UCL) and final interviews to take place **w/c 25 May** (at UCL).

To apply, please submit a curriculum vitae along with a covering letter briefly setting out your interest in the role of Chair of Council and your assessment of how you match the required selection criteria.

The preferred method of application is online at: **www.odgers.com/95503**.

If you are unable to apply online please email: **95503@odgers.com**.

All applications will receive an automated response.

All candidates are also requested to complete an online Diversity Monitoring Form which will be found at the end of the application process. This will assist the University in monitoring selection decisions to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved.

Any information collated from the forms will not be used as part of the selection process and will be treated as strictly confidential.

For a detailed conversation in confidence, please contact:

Nick Willis

nick.willis@odgers.com

Kate Penfold

kate.penfold@odgers.com

We are committed to ensuring everyone can access our website and application processes. This includes people with sight loss, hearing, mobility and cognitive impairments. Should you require access to these documents in alternative formats, please contact **tamsin.palmer@odgers.com**

