

The University College for Interdisciplinary Learning (UCOL)

From September 2012 the University of Manchester has a new institution: UCOL. It offers a range of innovative undergraduate courses intended to help fulfil the university's educational mission as laid out in the Manchester Matrix and our 2020 vision

UCOL is in essence an ethos-driven commissioning and co-ordination unit located outside of the existing faculty/school structure. Courses will be delivered by contributing schools on behalf of UCOL

UCOL seeks to broaden students' minds, encourage curiosity, enhance their employability and help them become informed, ethically-aware citizens and leaders, regardless of their degree specialisation.

The aim is for all students to have access to at least 30 credits of UCOL courses in the lifetime of their degree.



Why create the College?

The global debate on the purposes of a university education

Our university motto: *Cognitio, Sapientia, Humanitas* (Knowledge, Wisdom, Humanity)

Enhancing the University's presence in the national and global education marketplace

Our 2020 vision to create 'informed, thoughtful and globally responsible citizens'

Contributing to students' employability & skills development

Enhancing and enriching the student learning experience by taking them beyond the confines of their chosen discipline(s) and encouraging the pursuit of curiosity

Enhancing our commitment to research-led teaching

Exposing students to the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of the production of knowledge

How does the college work?

- By offering a range of innovative courses that will take students (and staff) outside of their 'silos'
- The commissioning and selection of courses is guided by:
 - *Innovative and exciting content (multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or discipline-based but designed for non-specialists)*
 - *Relevance to the delivery of the 'Manchester Matrix'*
 - *Courses mostly designed explicitly for the College*
 - *A demonstrable commitment to teaching excellence and use of innovative teaching methods (e-learning, PBL, EBL, etc)*
 - *Varied yet rigorous assessment that is sensitive to atypical student audiences*
 - *Utilisation of the university's cultural assets and those of the City of Manchester*
 - *Emphasis on skills development (use of skills flags to help students own their own skills development)*

University College Courses 2013/14

Semester 1

- Leadership in Action (MLP)
- Introduction to British Sign Language (SALC)
- Essential Enterprise (MEC)
- Science and the Humanities (CSEP/Law/FLS)
- Leadership of Learning (Education)
- Communicating with Confidence (SEAS)
- Introduction to British Sign Language (SALC)
- Bodies of Evidence (SALC/MHS)
- Translating Personal and Professional Values into Practice
- Innovation for a Sustainable Society (MBS)
- Future Cities (SED)
- Free Thinking(SoSS)
- Security: Policing, Counter-Terrorism & Cyber-Security (Law)
- Engaging Communities (Education)
- Intercultural communication (Education)
- Becoming Global (Education)

Semester 2

- You can't say that! Learning to Think and Argue Critically (Law/FLS/Medicine)
- Creative encounters: Science and the Arts (SALC/CHSTM)
- Physics and the Grand Challenges of Today (Physics)
- Diverse Britain in a Globalising World (SoSS/Medicine/SALC)
- Bioethics: contemporary Issues in Science and Biomedicine (FLS)
- The Digital Society (UoM Library)
- The Art of Enterprise (MEC)
- Body, Health & Well-Being (MHS)
- Diverse Britain in a Globalising World (SoSS/SALC/MHS)
- Global Health Challenges in an Unequal World (HCRI)
- Collecting and Exhibiting culture (Museum, Gallery/Library)
- Ethics and Sustainable Business (MEC)
- World Languages (Arabic & Mandarin) (ULC)
- Figuring Out Society: Data in the News (SoSS)

Awards

UCOL is also a key partner in delivering 'Manchester Awards'. These are certificates awarded to students for undertaking a combination of approved courses offered by UCOL as well as a programme of volunteering, placements or appropriate activity. The award is cited on the student's HEAR.

- **The Manchester Leadership Programme**

This is a well –established award in which students take 'Leadership in Action' – a UCOL course – and combine this with 20, 40 or 60 hours of volunteering to gain a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award. Currently more than 1200 students are taking the award.

- **The Manchester Global Award**

This is a new award, starting in September 2013. Students take one of two UCOL courses ('Intercultural communication' or 'Becoming Global') and combine this with completion of an approved international/intercultural experience. They can draw upon our study abroad programmes, the ERASMUS scheme, Study India and Study China, or work with international students on Campus. Finally, they write a reflective presentation or project that brings together the academic and experiential elements of the programme.

- **The Manchester Sports Award**

This is still in the planning stage but we envisage it combining completion of a course on Sport Science or the Sociology of Sport with placement in a leading sports organisation or club in the region.

The college: the larger vision

A new interface between the university and its students

A new teaching space - a teaching commons?

Signature public lectures using university stars

Showcasing teaching excellence - TED style talks & podcasts

Challenges

Through discussions with colleagues and extensive consultation with students, we have identified the key challenges ahead:

- **Changing the student culture**

Lack of knowledge of UCOL (signs that this is diminishing rapidly)

Risk aversion, mostly connected with employability

Fear of failure outside of disciplinary comfort zone

Unfamiliarity with the idea of interdisciplinarity and uncertain of its value

Students more readily attracted to courses with a visible, concrete 'value-added' (e.g. an additional award, acquisition of a concrete skill, evident enhanced employability)

- **Changing the academic culture**

Convincing academic colleagues of the merits of UCOL and its mission - there is widespread support but also some scepticism

The challenge of establishing UCOL in a very large, decentralized institution with diverse teaching and assessment cultures - the 'Silo' effect

Finding space in curricula for UCOL courses

Drilling down knowledge and support for UCOL to the academic advisement level

And the good news is ...

- Initial feedback for our first year of courses looks very good
- Student consultation indicates that when fully informed about UCOL and its mission students are very enthusiastic
- Clear signs of growing awareness of UCOL among both staff and students
- We know this what key employer groups and professional bodies want.

More information?

Website: www.college.manchester.ac.uk



search for 'theunicollege'



www.twitter.com/theunicollege

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