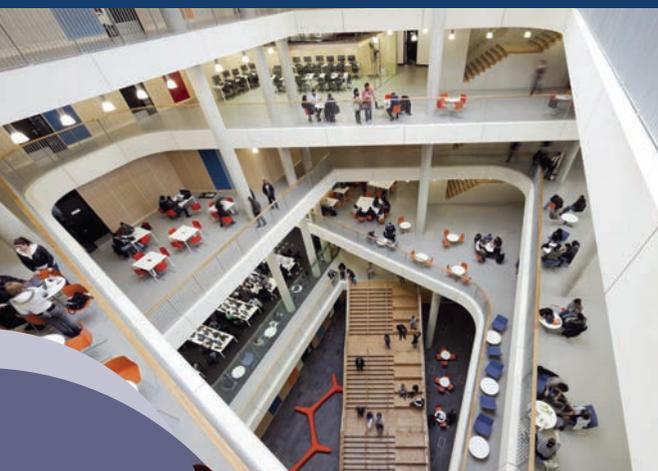


UNITED COLLEGES GROUP

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-24



Foreword

UNITED COLLEGES GROUP
3
YEARS OLD

CIRCA
16,000
LEARNERS

AROUND
1,000
DEDICATED STAFF

The last few years have seen significant challenges faced by the FE sector and other education and skills providers. Funding has been limited, there has been a need to respond to both changes in government policy and employer requirements caused by global macroeconomic shifts, Brexit negotiations and planning have caused uncertainty for both employers and providers, and the needs of a post Covid 19 economy are likely to be very different to that which existed before March 2020.

Despite these challenges United Colleges Group – only 3 years old since it was formed from the merger of two existing London based colleges in 2017 – has continued to provide strong education and skills support to the c16,000 learners who we serve every year. We have around 1,000 dedicated, skilled and enthusiastic staff who always put the needs of our students first. We have invested strongly in technology to support our learning, which led to a seamless transfer to online learning for our students when college campuses were forced to close this year, and

very positive feedback from our students about their online learning experience. Our very robust finances (rated as ‘Outstanding’ by the Education & Skills Funding Agency) mean that we are well set up to continue to invest more to meet the needs of those students in the future.

We know that the world of education was already changing before the outbreak of Covid 19, and the pace of that change is only likely to be increased by the changes it has forced on society. Increasingly our students will expect a combination of face to face and remote learning that meets their needs, and we need to be able to meet their expectations by embracing new technology and new pedagogical methods. ‘Physically separate, virtually together’ will be a mantra that underpins our strategy – reflecting the fact that every one of our students should feel part of our wider learning community, wherever they are based and however they are undertaking that learning.

Foreword

We also know that the local communities in which our campuses are based – and in which our students live – are likely to be equally important to them in the future. We have a strong history of being a good partner in London generally and our local communities specifically – not just providing locally relevant education, skills and training, but also actively helping those communities in a myriad of other ways. We will seek to strengthen those local links even further during the duration of this strategy, by embedding ourselves as a key part of the communities in which many of students come from, and seeking to help those communities prosper through proactive work with them and other local partners.

We know we need to continue to be ambitious for our students, and encourage all of them to be ambitious for themselves. Our students – wherever they are based – deserve to have an outstanding experience and to have an education and development of their skills that is truly world class. That is why we have raised our aspirations this year, and lifted the bar for us over the next 5 years. For us to serve our

students as best we can it is no longer good enough for us to aspire to be London’s best college group. We aspire to be among the best at delivering education and skills across the globe.

Many people – students, staff and governors – have contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan and we thank them for their input. Our new mission – **to deliver outstanding, world class education and skills** – sets us a clear target that we hope each and every one of our students, staff and partners will work with us to help us achieve. It will be a challenging – but we hope also exciting – journey for us over the next 5 years and beyond. This Strategic Plan 2020-24 sets out some of the key milestones and goals that we believe will help us along our way. We hope you find the plan interesting and exciting, and look forward to you joining with us all on that journey to become the best we can for each and every one of our students.

With our best wishes,

Nick Bell
CEO



Tony Johnston
Chair of the
Corporation

Our History, Your Future

Our predecessor colleges have a long and proud tradition of over 100 years of serving their local communities by providing education and skills to help students develop themselves and their careers. The College of North West London and City of Westminster College merged in 2017 to become United Colleges Group (UCG).

CITY OF
WESTMINSTER
COLLEGE



UCG now operates from 6 sites across the Centre and North West of London with campuses in Paddington Green, Willesden, Wembley, Maida Vale and Kings Cross. In addition, the Group operates the Cockpit Theatre in Church Street near Paddington – the only purpose built theatre in the round in London.

UCG provides services to around 16,000 learners a year, including 16-18 year-olds, adults, apprentices and students with high needs. With an annual turnover of around £50m it is one of the top 20 largest college groups in the UK.

Our mission is to **deliver outstanding, world class education and skills**. We want all of our students to have an outstanding experience whilst learning with UCG and to be part of a learning community – in London, the wider UK and internationally – that provides them with the very best education and skills.



We want our students to continue to be part of our learning community throughout their lives – seeking out new learning opportunities as their lives and careers progress, and contributing by sharing their skills and experiences with others. Even though the members of our learning community may be physically separate, we want them to be virtually together to feel part of and contribute to our community wherever they are based.

Our Values

Following consultation there are 6 key values that are important to our students, our staff and our partners. They are:

- Student-focused
- Transparent
- Ambitious
- Inclusive
- Respectful
- Supportive

Together these values form the **STAIRS** that help us to support every one in our learning community to reach their aspirations.



Our Values

In more detail, the values mean:

Student-focused: All of our attention will be on meeting the needs of our current and future students and we will listen to them to ensure we best understand those needs

Transparent: We will be open and honest with all students and staff, deliver on what we promise and communicate effectively.

Ambitious: We will promote high aspirations for all of our students, create a high performance and innovative culture and welcome change where it benefits the needs of our students.

Inclusive: We will be open and accessible to everyone who needs us, whatever their background, promote the highest standards of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and challenge intolerance and inequity wherever we see it.

Respectful: Everyone in our learning community will treat each other with respect and fairness, and actively listen and respond to issues raised by members of that learning community.

Supportive: We will support each other within our learning communities to be the best we can be, and help each other when we face challenges and difficulties.



Our Context

UCG operates in a number of external contexts, the most significant of which are the London context, the national context and the international context. These are described below:

London Context

Our roots are firmly in London, and helping to meet the needs of Londoners remains our primary focus. London has a strong economy covering a range of sectors, but still has challenges to ensure that every single Londoner has the skills they require to maximise their potential in this economy. Funding for adult skills in London is now fully devolved to the Mayor and the Mayor's approach to dealing with the skills challenges is set out in the 'Skills for Londoners Strategy'. We will ensure that we are fully supporting this strategy throughout its duration, and continue to have dialogue with the Mayor and the Greater London Authority (GLA) about how we can help further. We will also be ready to assist the Mayor and GLA to meet their wider skills agenda should public funding for 16-18 year olds and apprenticeships (which are both currently funded nationally by the ESFA) be devolved to them.

London Boroughs also have a strong role to play in developing education and skills for their populations. We will work closely with those Boroughs where we already have a strong relationship (Brent, Westminster and Camden) to support their education and skills aspirations and help the communities who use our physical campuses to thrive through our proactive involvement. We will also seek to develop closer relationships with other Boroughs whose residents are, or will be, part of our learning community to support them in a similar way.



Our Context

National Context

Nationally the economy faces a number of challenges over the next few years as the impacts of both Brexit and Covid-19 feed through. Education, skills and employability are likely to be at the forefront of government policy to help address these impacts. The Government has already indicated that it will create a National Retraining Scheme and potentially invest some of the post Brexit 'Prosperity Fund' in education and skills. Given the economic issues noted above there may be more funding available in the short to medium term. Along with these changes, the DfE is due to publish a white paper on post 16 education in England early in 2021. It will be important for UCG to play a strong part in helping the UK economy by seizing these opportunities as they arise and keeping their longer term impacts under review as the Strategic Plan is annually refreshed.

UCG already operates beyond London, as we provide apprenticeships in a number of regions and a number of our students already come from areas outside London. Over the next few years we want to expand this work further so that more students benefit from being part of learning community, with more activity in both Mayoral and non-Mayoral parts of England and we will need to make new relationships with local decision makers and partners as we do this.

International Context

Covid 19 is likely to have a medium term impact on the global economy, as well as the UK, and this may well advance the pace of current global trends towards more automation and an increased demand for higher skills. This is particularly likely to occur in those countries with a less well developed skills system. During the period of this plan UCG will need to consider how it might expand its learning community to benefit more international students, either physically in the UK or virtually overseas.



Our Strategic Themes & Objectives

During the development of this Strategic Plan we identified 9 strategic themes and key strategic objectives that we need to deliver to help us achieve our mission.

These will be our primary focus over the next 5 years. Underpinning these strategic themes are a set of facilitating strategies that we are developing to support this overarching Strategic Plan, as shown below.

| Mission | Strategic delivery themes | Strategic enabling themes | Facilitating strategies |
|---|---|---|-------------------------|
| To deliver world class education & skills | Enhancing student experience & outcomes | High performance, entrepreneurial culture | Curriculum |
| | Improving staff satisfaction & engagement | Embracing diversity & inclusion | Student engagement |
| | Robust financial health | Safe & supportive environment | People |
| | Growing & diversifying income | Fit for future assets | Communications |
| | | Building the Group reputation | Property |
| | | | IT / digital |
| | | | Finance |
| | | | Environmental |
| | | | Commercial |
| | | Brand | |
| | | Community engagement | |

Our Strategic Themes & Objectives

1 Enhancing Student Experience and Outcomes.

By 2024 we will have the **highest level of student satisfaction and achievement in London**. Students are our number one priority as an organization and we want to ensure that they have the best possible experience, and get the best possible educational achievements, they can. In delivering this aim we will create an inclusive learning community that fosters high aspirations for all of our students, as well as exploring different models to deliver Higher Education, A Levels and T Levels that give our students access to a wide range of learning that best meets their needs. We will also seek opportunities to develop partnerships with secondary schools and academies to help younger students seamlessly transition to become a part of our learning community.



Our Strategic Themes & Objectives

2 Improving Staff Satisfaction and Engagement

By 2024 we will have **the highest level of staff satisfaction of any college group in London**. We know that to deliver an outstanding student experience and world class education and skills we need to have

a great group of staff who feel engaged in decision making, have a say in how to improve the work that they do and feel happy and satisfied with their jobs. We will work closely with all of our staff to understand the things that can improve their jobs and increase their job satisfaction, and make changes based on their input.



Our Strategic Themes & Objectives

3 Growing our learning community

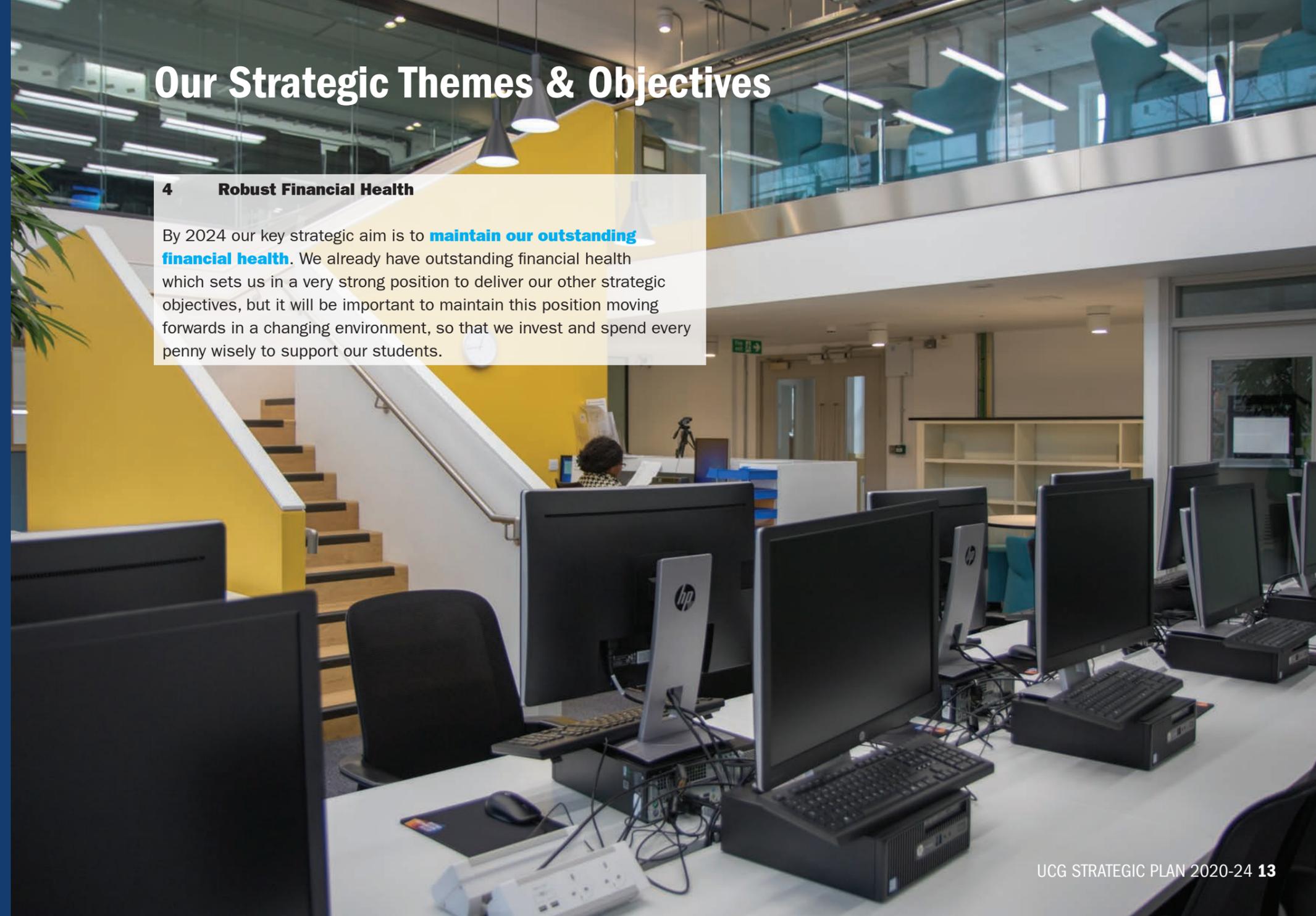
By 2024 our key strategic aim is to **double our current student numbers so that over 40,000 a year benefit from being part of our learning community**. There are many areas where additional scale will help us to provide an even better experience to students and enable us to provide an even wider range of courses and learning activities. We will seek to grow our student numbers each year and consider opportunities for merging with other providers if we believe it will help our students and their learning journey. We will also explore new commercial models and options to secure charitable funds to generate income that can be reinvested back into helping our students learning and experience.



Our Strategic Themes & Objectives

4 Robust Financial Health

By 2024 our key strategic aim is to **maintain our outstanding financial health**. We already have outstanding financial health which sets us in a very strong position to deliver our other strategic objectives, but it will be important to maintain this position moving forwards in a changing environment, so that we invest and spend every penny wisely to support our students.



Our Strategic Themes & Objectives

5 High Performance, Entrepreneurial Culture

By 2024 our key strategic aim is that **we encourage all students to raise their aspirations and reach their maximum potential**. While we already encourage all our students to have high aspirations, we want to do more to help them fulfil their potential beyond traditional learning. We will focus on creating strong links with a range of employers to enable our students to find the best opportunities that suit them and help our entrepreneurially minded students to transform their ideas into reality. Whatever our students decide to do in their future, they will be part of our wider learning community and we will be there to help them develop their potential further in the future when they need us.



Our Strategic Themes & Objectives

6 Embracing Diversity & Inclusion

By 2024 our key strategic aim is that **we are an exemplar organisation in our approach to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) for our students and staff**. At UCG we have an extremely diverse set of students and staff and we already celebrate and build positive impacts from that diversity in numerous ways. We want to build on these strong foundations to be not just a good organization for EDI, but to be recognized as amongst the best in the country and internationally. As our fully inclusive learning community develops we will encourage other organisations and stakeholders to improve their approach to critical EDI issues as well.



Our Strategic Themes & Objectives

7 Safe & Supportive Environment

By 2024 our key strategic aim is that **all students and staff feel safe and highly supported by the Group**. We already operate a very safe environment, with our safeguarding rated as effective by OFSTED. We will focus on maintaining that safety, and supporting our students and staff in our learning community, as we move to embrace new ways of learning enabled by technology. We know that both our students and our staff need to have positive physical and mental wellbeing if they are to reach their maximum potential, and we will develop new ways of supporting that wellbeing for everyone in our learning community.



Our Strategic Themes & Objectives

8 Fit for the Future Assets

By 2024 our key strategic aim is to **have property and IT assets that enable us to meet the current and future needs of students**. The needs of our students are constantly changing in line with changes in our society, economy and technology, and we will ensure that our buildings

and technology are fully able to meet the changing needs of everyone in our learning community. Over the next few years we intend to invest significantly in both our property and technology so that both our physical and virtual campuses are leading edge in supporting an outstanding student experience and world class education and skills.



9 Building our Reputation

By 2024 our key strategic aim is to **be widely recognized for delivering world class education & skills**. We want as many people as possible to benefit from being part of our learning community, and to ensure that potential students and staff know about the outstanding experience and world class education and skills they can get by being part of our that community is vital. We want employers to know about the benefits that being a member of our learning community brings so they encourage their staff to join us when they need new skills. We want everyone in our local communities to know about us and the support we can give to help those communities develop, and we want central and local government to know about us so that we can help them to develop future skills and education policies that benefit our students.



Where we will be by 2024

Surplus over
£2m per
annum

OFSTED
outstanding

Leading organization
for Equality, Diversity
& Inclusion

Digital & Technology
used extensively
for learning

40,000 Learners a year

Achievement in top 10% of UK colleges

Strategic partner
for commercial
opportunities

Staff satisfaction
over 80%

Developed Strategic Partnership
for Higher Education

All physical campuses modernized to meet student needs

Strong reputation with
students, customers
and stakeholders

Turnover over
£100m per annum

Delivering the strategy

In order to deliver the strategy UCG will produce an annual operational plan and budget comprised of the key projects and deliverables expected to be achieved that year for each of the 9 strategic themes. The operational plan will also include a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each strategic theme to enable monitoring of progress against the strategic objectives. The operational plan and budget will be approved by the Corporation in the June or July preceding the year it relates to, and will be regularly monitored and reviewed by the Corporation throughout the year.

Further Information

For further information regarding issues contained in the Strategic Plan please visit our website at www.ucgac.uk, or alternatively contact Dian Pitter at Dian.Pitter@cwc.ac.uk.



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Willesden Campus
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 Dudden Hill Lane)
 London
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020 8208 5000

Neasden or Dollis Hill
 52, 98, 206, 226, 260, 266, 297, 302

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