



University College London (UCL) | Intelligent Workplace | UK & Ireland | Education

# Connecting educators to deliver better learning outcomes

## Client profile

University College London was founded in 1826 in order to open up education in England for the first time to students of any race, class or religion. It's the third-largest university in the UK by total enrolment and the largest by postgraduate enrolment and continues to operate under its founding principles of academic excellence, and research aimed at addressing real-world problems.

**'NTT Ltd. understands the technology experience we want to provide for our staff and students and always focuses on our best interests. They understand our goals and support us by providing solutions that bring them to life at speed.'**

**Ian Calkin**, UCC Team Lead,  
UCL

## Summary

With 13,000 staff and over 40,000 students, University College London (UCL) wanted to consolidate their communication and collaboration platform into a simpler yet more powerful and cost-effective solution.

NTT Ltd.'s experience, close partnership with Microsoft and the ability of our solution architects to provide strategic alignment were important to UCL. With a solid understanding and advanced view of Microsoft's roadmap, we were considered the ideal partner to enhance the work of UCL staff through Teams while providing ongoing support to implement new features as they became available.

## Vision

### Why UCL needed to upgrade their communication and collaboration platform

UCL's focus is to provide the best possible technology experience in order to maintain the excellence in education they are known for. With a large staff using multiple PBX infrastructures that were also approaching end of life, they wanted to enhance and modernize the communication and collaboration between academic and administration staff. Their goal was to move users to a more reliable and feature-rich platform for telephony that integrated with existing infrastructure while enabling staff to be more productive. Teams was chosen to support their existing agile working practices and better enable people to work from any location. Many of the educators were traditionally focused, using email, face-to-face meetings and phone calls as their standard communication methods. However, they struggled to broaden their networks and communities.

The university also needed to provide services for student clearing, something they hadn't done before, and required our support to create a contact center for 100 agents. With the ability to find available meeting rooms of appropriate size also a challenge, there was a desire to offer a more flexible solution for employees working from home. This element became crucial as the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown meant students and staff were sent home shortly after the first phase was completed.

### Which technologies?

- Microsoft Teams

### Which services?

- Teams Calling
- Teams Live Events
- Change Management
- Teamwork Assessment
- Managed Services

### Which partners?

- Microsoft

## Transformation

### How a modern platform enabled ongoing flexibility and adaptability to reduce disruption

A pilot project was carried out to test Teams at UCL across 2,500 users to ensure it met the university's needs and integrated well with existing technology. To establish the requirements of the project and understand the governance involved, a series of workshops were also held by NTT Ltd. Topics covered included voice, devices, video, organizational change management and secure remote working. With most staff at UCL accustomed to using a handset, the shift to making calls on a laptop or tablet was a significant change.

We worked side by side with the UCL change team to ensure staff were well equipped to embrace the new technology and harness its full potential and also worked with their accessibility lead to ensure Teams met the requirements of all users. We used user experience feedback to inform the governance policies that were implemented in order to protect users and give them the most manageable Teams experience. The university didn't want to restrict the usage and capabilities of Teams but were also keen to ensure it worked for people of different needs, which is why it was imperative we achieved the balance.

We created a SharePoint site to help users better understand the system and its features and made learning available for people to read or watch at a convenient time. Videos were uploaded into Stream channels with the transcript feature enabled to ensure as many people as possible could access the material. Our Adoption and Change Management team also held training sessions in lecture theatres, which were always full. The UCL team understood the potential of the tool and they were keen to learn more about the possibilities. Users and the project team alike were equally invested in getting the most out of the investment.

Following the successful pilot, the voice component of Teams was integrated with UCL's existing platform and rolled out to 11,000 staff. Shortly after the initial deployment, the COVID-19 pandemic began. Fortunately, UCL's partnership with NTT Ltd. and the implementation of Teams enabled them to respond quickly to the subsequent lockdown. As students and employees were confined to their homes, UCL were able to scale up the number of Teams users to 37,000 in a week, reducing disruption and quickly enabling remote work at scale.

The pandemic also required the roll out of their clearing call center to be accelerated, and we provided a test platform for them to assess the solution before building their own instance. The call center is now live, with 100 call center agents ensuring swift responses to prospective students during the busy three-month clearing period between July and September.

**'We were able to bring NTT Ltd.'s implementation experience together with our knowledge of UCL as a single team. With a combined effort and level of experience, it made us a lot more effective.'**

**Ian Calkin**, UCC Team Lead,  
UCL

## Results

### **What a unified communication and collaboration solution delivers for UCL staff**

Beyond UCL's original plan to deploy Teams for voice, the pandemic has showcased to their staff the many additional possibilities the platform offers. Feedback has shown that Teams is reducing email dialogue, allowing people to communicate more freely and easily via chat, video and voice calling, while also collaborating on documents remotely. Teams meetings have provided an alternative platform for communicating with students and fits well with UCL's culture and use of technology.

Departments hold daily virtual stand-ups using video and audio, and several Teams features have been leveraged to enhance the experience for those working from home, including Live Events. UCL's ISD team broadcast saw a 100% increase in attendance to almost 500 employees, and the functionality has now been pushed to lecturers in order to enable student engagement online.

As the benefits of Teams continue to be realized across UCL, their strategic relationship with us is helping to drive efficiency and innovation, with monthly Teams roadmap updates that explore how new features could further help the university. Recent discussions have included the use of chatbots and website messaging, while a new project is underway that will see Teams Meeting Room solutions deployed across 200 meeting rooms and auditoria to further enhance connectivity and collaboration.

We have an ongoing project to work with UCL to explore additional options to enhance the experience with mobility issues. This is something we are currently exploring with their team and their user groups. Being part of these user groups and having access to their project and accessibility lead has been incredibly insightful for our learning as well as ensuring we are doing all we can to support the university with their inclusion efforts.