

Year 8

Spring 2026 SDL Options Booklet

The UCL Academy vision is that students will experience an inspirational world-class education built on a culture of academic excellence, social responsibility and a transformational curriculum. Self-Directed Learning (SDL) supports this vision by offering all students the opportunity to experience learning and skill development outside of the academic curriculum.

SDL activities run on Wednesdays and Thursdays during the last lesson of the day. There are lots of different activities on offer and you are able to give your preferences on which one you do. This is a fantastic opportunity for you to try something you have never done before or to spend more time doing something you already enjoy. A mix of these is best!

This SDL Cycle runs from 14 January to 12 March 2026

SDL runs in Lesson 7 on Wednesdays and Thursdays

Please read the descriptions and key information carefully so you understand when and how often each SDL will run, and also if there are any additional application/auditioning processes required.

Once you have done this, complete the online survey using the link at the end of this booklet. All students will attend an SDL on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Information about any SDLs added throughout the year will be sent home as they arise. Parents who are interested in running an SDL, know of someone who may be interested in running an SDL or would like further support can email SDL@uclacademy.co.uk.

The deadline for selecting choices online is **5pm Thursday 18 December 2025**.

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Important information about making your choices:

- Students need to think carefully before making their **top 5 choices** for each day. Students will be assigned SDL activities from their selected top 5 options.
- Be wise! If you have applied late to a popular SDL it will not be possible to allocate it to you. If you apply to a girls-only SDL and you are a boy, you will not be able to attend and will have wasted a choice.
- Students and parents should work together to choose SDLs.
- Students will be able to apply for their SDL via a Google form. This will be sent directly to your Academy email address. You will need to be logged into your Academy account for the form to work.
- Apply by the deadline - it will make a difference to which SDL you are allocated!
- If you don't apply, then you will receive any SDL that has space in it.

Overview of Spring SDL Options for Year 8

Title of SDL	Assigned Day	Invite Only?	Continues into next term(s)?
5D Diamond Painting	Wednesday	No	No
Albanian Club	Wednesday	No	No
<i>Art Scholars</i>	Wednesday	Yes	Yes
Badminton	Wednesday	No	No
Business Budgeting	Wednesday	No	No
Chess Club	Wednesday	No	No
Creative Writing	Wednesday	No	No
Deconstructing Disney	Wednesday	No	No
Fashion & Modelling	Wednesday	No	No
Film Club	Wednesday	No	No
Lego Club	Wednesday	No	No
Life Skills Using AI	Wednesday	No	No
Paint by numbers	Wednesday	No	No
<i>Performing with UCL</i>	Wednesday	Yes	No
School Music Ensemble	Wednesday	Yes and No	No
Sparx Maths Club	Wednesday	Yes and No	No
Sport Analysis	Wednesday	No	No
Stop! Think! Speak!	Wednesday	No	No
VEX Robotics	Wednesday	No	No
Wellbeing Journalling	Wednesday	No	No

Title of SDL	Assigned Day	Invite Only?	Continues into next term(s)?
5D Diamond Painting	Thursday	No	No
Art & Craft	Thursday	No	No
Basketball	Thursday	No	No
Bead Craft	Thursday	No	No
Board Games	Thursday	No	No
Cards Club	Thursday	No	No
Chess Club	Thursday	No	No
China Explore	Thursday	No	No
Choir	Thursday	No	Yes
Creative Writing	Thursday	No	No
<i>Debate Mate</i>	Thursday	Yes	No
Fencing	Thursday	No	No
Fitness Club for Girls	Thursday	No	No
Fitness Club for Boys	Thursday	No	No
<i>Mathematical Minds</i>	Thursday	Yes	No
Mindful Colouring	Thursday	No	No
<i>Numeracy Know-how</i>	Thursday	Yes	No
Premier League Football	Thursday	No	No
Reading Cafe	Thursday	No	No
Rise Up	Thursday	No	No
Student Leadership	Thursday	Yes	Yes
Trampolining	Thursday	No	No
Zumba for Girls	Thursday	No	No

SDLs Open to All Students - WEDNESDAYS

<p>5D Diamond Painting Day: Wednesday Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Cole</p>	<p>Description: You will create stunning, sparkly artwork by placing tiny resin “diamonds” onto a sticky, pre-printed canvas. It’s easy to learn, calming to do, and the results are beautiful. No artistic experience is needed.</p>
<p>Albanian Club Day: Wednesday Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Canolli</p>	<p>Description: Discover the beauty and spirit of Albania! Learn about Albanian culture, language, music, food, and traditions. Each session will explore something new, from tasting traditional dishes and learning basic Albanian phrases to celebrating national holidays and exploring the country’s history and art.</p>
<p>Badminton Day: Wednesday Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Friend</p>	<p>Description: Students will learn badminton skills, including key shots like the clear, drop, drive, and smash, alongside strategic serves (high, low, flick) to control the shuttle, move opponents, and build powerful attacks or delicate net plays.</p>
<p>Business Budgeting Day: Wednesday Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Byass</p>	<p>Description: Learn financial skills needed in running a business, including profit and loss accounting and balance sheets.</p>

<p>Chess Club Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Castano</p>	<p>Description: The Chess SDL is a space to learn and practise chess at all levels with students, as well as compete in matches. There is an opportunity for advice and coaching within our sessions and for students to test themselves against their peers. We will look to participate in Camden/Brent Chess Tournaments in the year.</p>
<p>Creative Writing Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Al-Hakim</p>	<p>Description: Students will be introduced to various writing techniques in order to create their own pieces. Students will learn to write with a variety of emotions and perspectives.</p>
<p>Deconstructing Disney Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned year groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of staff: Ms Abdi</p>	<p>Description: We will be critically analysing Disney and deconstructing all the hidden messages in our favourite childhood films. Come with an open mind and suggestions!</p>
<p>Fashion & Modelling Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Ahmadi</p>	<p>Description: Step into the world of fashion and confidence! Students will explore the basics of modeling — from runway walking and posing to personal presentation and style. Whether you're interested in fashion, photography, or just want to boost your self-confidence, this session will help you shine both on and off the runway.</p>

<p>Film Club Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Rago</p>	<p>Description: Lights, camera, action! Join Film Club to watch and discuss an exciting mix of blockbusters, classics, and world cinema. This is a fun space to analyse storytelling, share opinions and develop critical thinking skills.</p>
<p>Lego Club Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Kirk</p>	<p>Description: Relax and recharge at Lego Club! This is a space to de-stress and build freely. Unleash your imagination, connect with friends, and enjoy the calming power of creative expression.</p>
<p>Life Skills Using AI Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Years 8 and 9 only</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Pujeh</p>	<p>Description: Empower your future at this innovative club where young learners master essential life skills through Artificial Intelligence. Build confidence, problem-solving abilities, and real-world readiness in a fun, tech-driven environment.</p>
<p>Painting By Numbers Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Rahman</p>	<p>Description:  Looking for a relaxing, creative way to express yourself? Painting by Numbers is the perfect blend of art and focus—no experience needed! Easy to follow; watch your masterpiece come to life. It's calming and fun!</p>
<p>School Music Ensemble Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: Yes and No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Winston</p>	<p>Description: Ensembles are where a group of instrumentalists play a range of music together. This could be favourite contemporary songs, tunes from musicals, jazz pieces or classics from throughout history. We will be aiming to perform in school concerts.</p>

<p>Sparx Maths Club Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: Yes and No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Felix</p>	<p>Description: This is a space to do and get support with your Sparx Maths homework.</p>
<p>Sport Analysis Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: Yes and No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Cherif</p>	<p>Description: We will be observing sporting performances and doing a breakdown analysis of biomechanics, physiology and injury.</p>
<p>Stop! Think! Speak! Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Sef</p>	<p>Description: Make like the stars and sing your heart out! Are you a Tyla who unties your vocal chords? Or is your voice worth £5000k like 50 Cent? Then come along, let off some steam and sing away your troubles.</p>
<p>VEX Robotics Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Years 7 and 8 only</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Asare</p>	<p>Description: Students will work in groups to build a robotic model. There may be opportunities to join regional, national and possibly work competitions against other schools as part of it.</p>
<p>Wellbeing Journalling Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Mensah</p>	<p>Description: Using short prompts, pupils write or draw about gratitude, kindness, and achievements. The activity promotes emotional literacy, resilience, and a positive mindset in a calm, supportive environment.</p>

SDLs Open to All Students - THURSDAYS

<p>5D Diamond Painting Day: Thursday Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Ossman</p>	<p>Description: You will create stunning, sparkly artwork by placing tiny resin “diamonds” onto a sticky, pre-printed canvas. It’s easy to learn, calming to do, and the results are beautiful. No artistic experience is needed.</p>
<p>Art & Craft Day: Wednesday Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Noukhas</p>	<p>Description: We will have different arts and crafts sessions each week. Painting. Crafting with recycled material. Origami. Using chenille needles to sew through different kinds of material. Rock painting. Drying flowers.</p>
<p>Basketball Day: Thursday Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Stiven</p>	<p>Description: Students will learn basketball skills, like shooting, dribbling and scrimmage, to develop their game.</p>
<p>Bead Craft Day: Thursday Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Oyelade</p>	<p>Description: Every week students will make different designs of bracelets, necklaces, earrings, phone or bag chains. Be creative and combine different types of beads to make something beautiful.</p>

<p>Board Games Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Abbas</p>	<p>Description: Roll the dice! Come along to the Board Games SDL where you can meet and mix with new people whilst playing a range of different games.</p>
<p>Cards Club Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Uddin</p>	<p>Description: Shuffle up and deal! Enjoy classic games and strategy battles in a relaxed atmosphere. It is the perfect space to sharpen your mind, challenge friends, and have fun with the deck.</p>
<p>Chess Club Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Ajukaku</p>	<p>Description: The Chess SDL is a space to learn and practise chess at all levels with students, as well as compete in matches. There is an opportunity for advice and coaching within our sessions and for students to test themselves against their peers. We will look to participate in Camden/Brent Chess Tournaments in the year.</p>
<p>China Explore Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Year 8 only</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Chen</p>	<p>Description: China Explore invites curious students to discover Chinese language, culture, and history. Through Mandarin taster sessions, arts workshops, and research projects, participants develop critical thinking and independent research skills while broadening their global horizons in this exciting learning program.</p>

<p>Choir Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: Yes, into Spring and Summer 2026</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Baxter</p>	<p>Description: Stretch your vocal chords and be an integral part of the Academy's performance team. The Choir contributes to concerts both in and out of the Academy. Last year we performed at the Royal Albert Hall! It will also play a large role in the Academy's theatre production.</p>
<p>Creative Writing Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Thakore</p>	<p>Description: Students will be introduced to various writing techniques in order to create their own pieces. Students will learn to write with a variety of emotions and perspectives.</p>
<p>Fencing Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Coaches from Camden Fencing Club</p>	<p>Description: Be like Zorro, the Bride or Puss in Boots and learn the basics of Fencing and the discipline it requires. You will start with plastic equipment before moving onto real steel.</p>
<p>Fitness Club for Girls Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Lincoln</p>	<p>Description: Students will have access to the fitness suite and take part in a variety of sessions, including HIIT training, Zumba, Just dance and Boxercise. Great exercise to develop health and fitness.</p>
<p>Fitness Club for Boys Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Toyyuab</p>	<p>Description: Students will have access to the fitness suite and take part in a variety of sessions, including HIIT training, Zumba, Just dance and Boxercise. Great exercise to develop health and fitness.</p>

<p>Mindful Colouring Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Abdulkarim</p>	<p>Description: A chance to unwind and colour in interesting outlines. Be creative, relax, practise attention to details and leave with your own piece of art.</p>
<p>Premier League Football Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Years 7 and 8 only</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Mr Pirbhai</p>	<p>Description: "Each week, we'll watch highlights from the latest Premier League matches, analyse key moments, debate controversial decisions, and track our favourite teams and players. This SDL is all about fun, football, and friendship. Whether you're a die-hard supporter or just getting into the game, come and be part of the conversation. Bring your football passion—no boots required!"</p>
<p>Reading Cafe Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: Yes and No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Canolli</p>	<p>Description: Love books or want to read more? Join us as we explore a different genre each half-term — from fantasy to real-life stories. You'll choose your own books, take part in fun activities, and share recommendations in a relaxed, friendly setting. All reading levels welcome!</p>
<p>Rise Up Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Years 8 and 9 only</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Khan</p>	<p>Description: Be Real. Be Confidant. Be You. Rise up is a space for young people to grow stronger - not just on the outside, but the inside too. It's about learning how to believe in yourself, boost your confidence and work better with others. You will build self esteem, talk real about emotions and learn to speak up and support each other in a positive way.</p>

<p>Trampolining</p> <p>Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No</p> <p>Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Friend</p>	<p>Description: Develop new skills while having fun and staying active. In each session, students will learn how to control their movements, improve balance, and build confidence on the trampoline. They will be taught a range of techniques — from basic jumps and shapes to simple routines and combinations.</p>
<p>Zumba for Girls</p> <p>Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: No</p> <p>Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Years 7 and 8 only, girls only</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Pourani</p>	<p>Description: Warm-up movements are followed by selecting a favourite music as a group, dancing and singing together, mimicking the "Just Dance" movements from the screen, and improving fitness and meet new students.</p>

Invite Only SDLs

Invite only SDLs

Some invite-only SDLs will appear on the Google form and you should select these if you have been told you will have been invited by a teacher. If you are not told, but selected by a teacher, then you will be placed on this SDL. Invited students are expected to attend the SDL. Any additional choice you make for the same day will not be considered.

<p>Art Scholars Day: Wednesday Invite Only: Yes Continuing SDL: Yes, into Spring and Summer 2026 Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Hirson, Mr Williams and Ms Johnson</p>	<p>Description: Varying specialised art workshops and projects to push and inform our Art Scholars in different styles and techniques.</p>
<p>Debate Mate Day: Thursday Invite only: Yes Continuing SDL: No Assigned year groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of staff: Ms Llapashtica</p>	<p>Description: Want to boost your confidence, sharpen your speaking skills, and learn how to win any argument? Led by an external group, join the Debate Mate. It's fun, powerful, and helps you think fast, speak clearly, and lead with confidence. Whether you're loud or shy, everyone has a voice – come and use yours!</p>
<p>Mathematical Minds Day: Thursday Invite only: Yes Continuing SDL: No Assigned year Groups: Mixed year groups</p>	<p>Name of staff: Mr Campbell</p>	<p>Description: Students will investigate mathematical concepts they won't find in the classroom. They will learn to spot patterns and connections, to generalise algebraically, to solve problems and to see maths in different contexts.</p>

<p>Numeracy Know-how Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite only: Yes Continuing SDL: No</p> <p>Assigned year Groups: Mixed year groups</p>	<p>Name of staff: Miss Devlin</p>	<p>Description: A chance to catch up on the gaps in your knowledge to be able to better understand what you are learning in your maths class.</p>
<p>Performing with UCL Day: Wednesday</p> <p>Invite Only: Yes Continuing SDL: Yes, into Spring 2026</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Verity</p>	<p>Description: You will work with an expert to create a piece of performance work that will be performed at UCL's Bloomsbury Theatre in March 2026! It is an opportunity to be creative, collaborate with people who work in the Arts industry and create a unique piece of theatre.</p>
<p>Student Leadership Day: Thursday</p> <p>Invite Only: Yes (following election to the Council) Continuing SDL: Yes - if you are elected in the Autumn Term you will continue for the remainder of the year.</p> <p>Assigned Year Groups: Mixed Year Groups</p>	<p>Name of Staff: Ms Prodromou</p>	<p>Description: Student ambassador meetings to discuss the issues facing the students and work to make improvements to the student experience. Ambassadors will also receive leadership training and work with senior leaders on a regular basis.</p>