

## CASE STUDY

# University College London, UK

## Redesign of the university's career framework

Based in the UK, University College London (UCL) is consistently rated among the world's top 10 universities in global rankings. In 2014, UCL embarked on a root-and-branch reform to its three academic career pathways:

- » teaching fellow track
- » research fellow track
- » academic track (blending research and teaching).

The reforms were driven by a recognition that limited consistency and coherence existed between the university's three career tracks, and their scope was insufficiently flexible to recognise the full range and mix of activities undertaken by UCL academics. At the heart of the plans for change was also a major drive to improve the recognition and status of teaching and learning on campus. As UCL's 2034 strategy states:

*"...in common with other universities, we have struggled to substantiate our commitment to parity of esteem between research and teaching and other activities in relation to the reward of academic staff."*

The reform to the university's career pathways was designed to provide a new platform to raise expectations in and the profile of education at UCL.

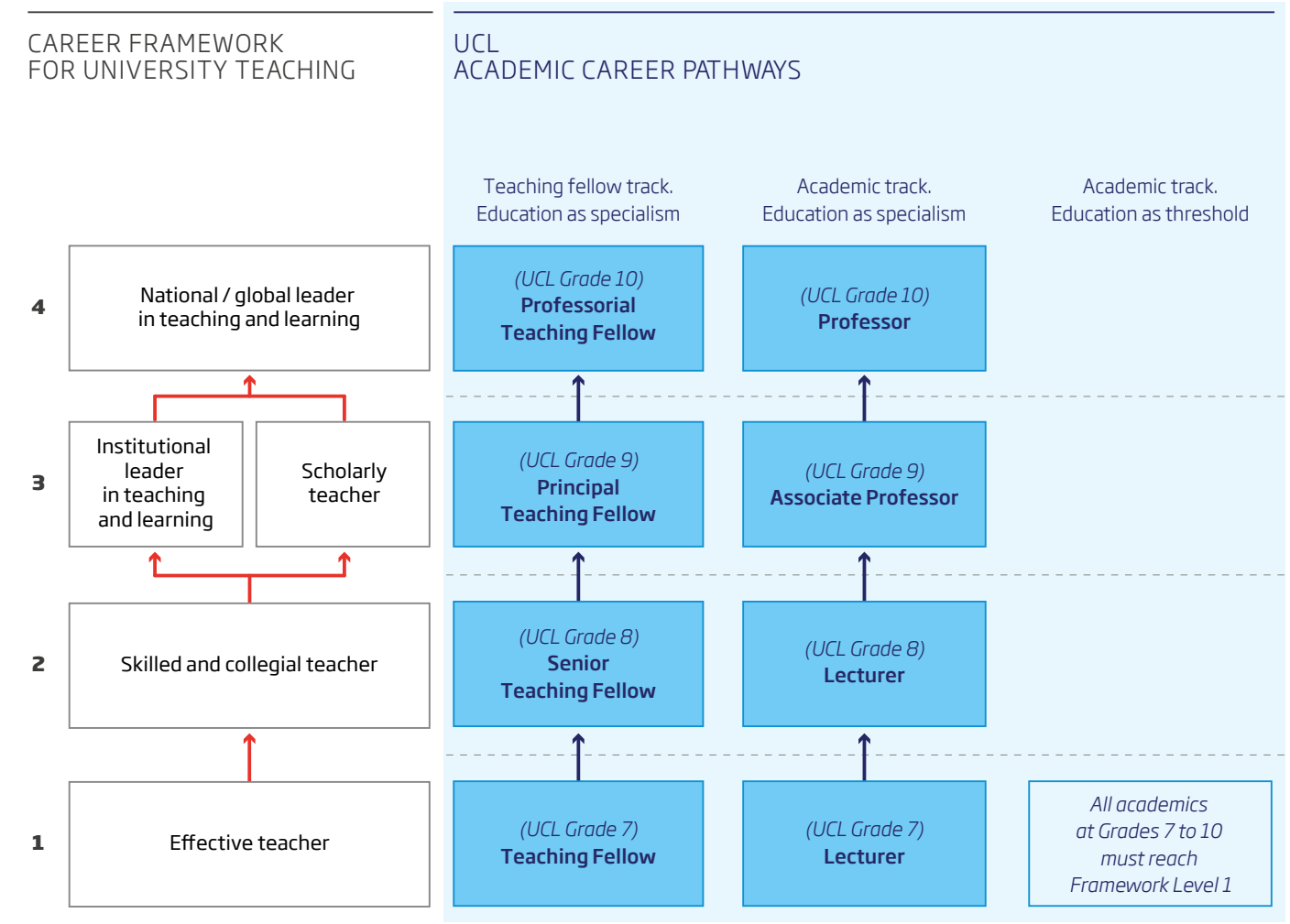
From 2014 to 2017, the university engaged the UCL community in a wide consultative process informed by global research and best practice in academic recognition practices, including the Career Framework for University Teaching. This development phase resulted in a new unified recognition system for UCL - entitled the *UCL Academic Careers Framework* - that would underpin academic appointments, professional development, appraisal and promotions at the university. The *UCL Academic Careers Framework* was launched in October 2017 for the university's 2017/18 promotion round.

The new *UCL Academic Careers Framework* uses a single model to support all three career pathways, through evaluating the candidate's impact across four domains: teaching, research, institutional citizenship and enterprise/external engagement. At each step in the university's career ladder (grades 7 to 10), candidates seeking appointment/promotion must identify which of these four domains is:

- » a **threshold** ability
- » a **core** ability
- » an **extended** (or specialist) ability.

The introduction of the 'threshold' criteria for each academic grade represents a major change to the UCL promotion systems; it requires promotion candidates at all grades of the academic track to meet a threshold level of teaching quality. As illustrated in the Figure, this minimum bar of teaching achievement that all UCL academics must meet is equivalent to the 'effective teacher' level of the Career Framework for University Teaching. The introduction of the 'core' and 'extended' criteria also accommodates a much greater breadth of academic profiles, including those with specialist contributions to the domains of teaching, institutional citizenship and enterprise/external engagement. Indeed, an individual on either the academic track or the teaching fellow track can identify education as their 'extended' ability and now has the opportunity to progress to a full professorship on that basis (as illustrated opposite).

In all domains - teaching, research, institutional citizenship and enterprise/external engagement - career progression under the *UCL Academic Careers Framework* is underpinned by the academic's sphere and quality of impact. This focus on personal impact has been used, in particular, to design clearly articulated pathways to progression on the basis of teaching and learning. The *UCL Academic Careers Framework* also provides clear guidance on the sources of evidence (termed 'indicators of impact') that could be used to support progression on the basis of teaching and learning at each grade.



**Figure:** The relationship between the levels of the Career Framework for University Teaching and teaching and learning components of UCL's new academic pathways, illustrated for: (i) the teaching fellow track, where education has been selected as the candidate's specialism; (ii) the academic track, where education has been selected as the candidate's specialism; and (iii) the academic track, where education is identified as the candidate's threshold ability