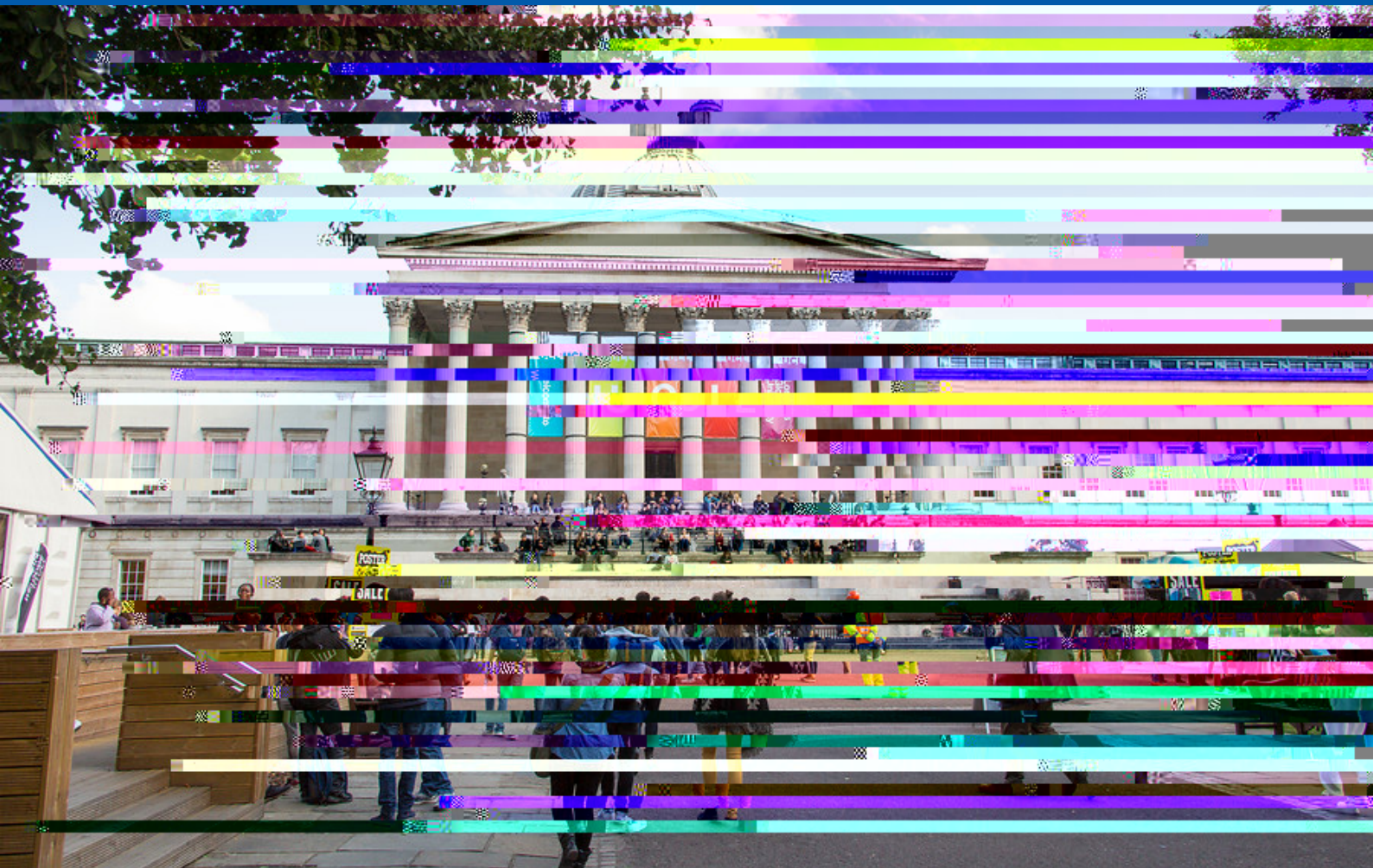




UCL Integrated Legal Advice Clinic:



UCL iLAC in 2020/21

Community demand is higher than in previous years as we continue to deal with both the short- and long-term impacts of the pandemic. This increased demand is matched by our ambition to provide outstanding service to our clients and to use this time to promote our vision of access to justice and equality for all.

We are grateful to our supporters whose contributions have enabled us to grow and make meaningful improvements to the health and well-being of our clients and the local community. Without their generosity, we would not be able to provide the services that we do to the community or enable our students to access such an amazing learning opportunity.

This past year has been a year of recovery; we are pleased to share with you details of our response and highlights from the year in the report that follows.

Responding to challenges of the pandemic

This year, we had to master new technologies in order to continue to run our clinic and allow students to undertake their clinical legal education. Though we had originally hoped to be able to run clinic placements in person in the second term, unfortunately the advent of another lockdown meant that this wasn't possible.

Whilst finding a way for students to remotely volunteer at the clinic from locations across the world posed some regulatory and technical challenges, we are pleased that all our clinical students were able to engage in casework and meet clients virtually.

In July 2020, following the lifting of the first lockdown, UCL iLAC re-opened its physical office for face-to-face advice. Since then, we have remained opened on an appointment-only basis, ensuring strict adherence to social distancing rules.



Students and education at UCL iLAC

This year, we had 35 students volunteering at UCL iLAC. Of the 35 students, 21 were final year LLB students on our clinical legal education course, Access to Justice and Community Engagement (AJCE). A further 10 took part in UCL iLAC research projects, whilst the remaining four supported us over the summer as Summer Fellows. Due to the pandemic, we unfortunately were unable to increase the number of places available for students.

The impact of the pandemic

Due to the suspension of face-to-face teaching, we delivered all student training online via both pre-recorded and live sessions. All AJCE students completed their placements remotely while being supervised by clinic staff. UCL iLAC Assistants completed a remote research project addressing a local policy issue instead of coming into the clinic to support with reception and administrative duties. Despite the ongoing uncertainty, staff worked hard to ensure that students were not disadvantaged and that their assessments were not affected. We were also grateful for our students' understanding and flexibility.

Summer Fellowship Programme

This year we ran our Summer Fellowship Programme in person at the clinic. Four students – two undergraduate and two graduate Laws students – worked p/p

105.9(u)16.5(d)27.9(e)56.5(d)15(a)73.2(t)1-6.5(t)227.1(e)-7.1(di)20.5ngd15(md)2741(e)-7-6(e)50.7(t)94.6(i)20.5ngd-13.3(s)3.6,d

Achievements

The clinic has enjoyed a number of significant achievements this past year, including passing our specialist quality mark audit. The audit enables us to maintain our legal aid contract, which we gained three years ago. We were also delighted to be shortlisted for the LawWorks and Attorney General Student Pro Bono Awards 2021 under the category of 'Best Contribution by a Law School'.

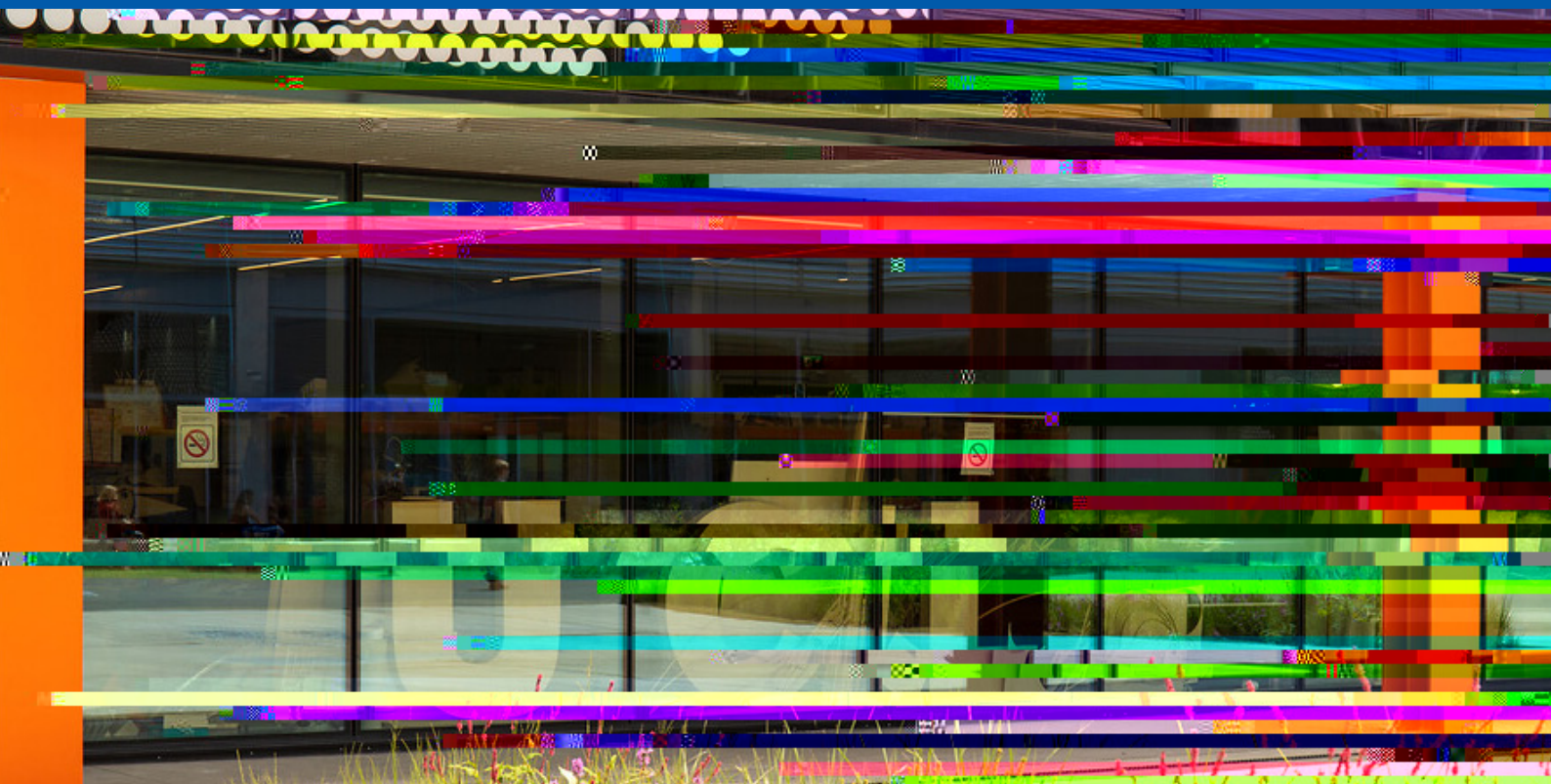
Perhaps our stand-out highlight of the year was our successful application to become an approved training provider with the Solicitors Regulation Authority. We were also able to offer a training contract to our very first trainee, Michael Marshall. Already a Welfare Benefits Adviser at the clinic, as well as being a UCL graduate who undertook our clinical legal education module, we are now able to support him in progressing towards qualification as a solicitor.

UCL Centre for Access to Justice: 2020/21 in review

Outside of UCL iLAC, CAJ has had a busy year. Our Head of Projects, Shiva Riahi, went on secondment to the Ministry of Justice for a year in November 2020. Head of Legal Practice, Rachel Knowles, has therefore stepped in to supervise the activities of the CAJ more broadly, with support from other team members. We have also welcomed a new projects coordinator to assist with running all our pro bono activities for the year ahead.

The pandemic has made it more challenging to plan pro bono projects for students to work on this year, as not all organisations were able to supervise students remotely and many were simply forced to shut down their services. Nevertheless, our students were impressive in their commitment to and interest in pro bono work; in total, we had 414 applications and were able to offer placements to 209 students. These included placements with the following partners:

- Pro Bono Community
- Safe Space Network (representing children excluded or at risk of exclusion from school)
- University of London Refugee Law Clinic
- Haringey Migrant Support Centre
- Somers Town Legal Advice Centre



Plans for the future

The future remains unpredictable as we await to see how the pandemic continues to develop. However, our plans for this year are to return to normal as much as possible, and to return to the office more frequently. We hope very much that government rules will continue to allow us to host students in person in the clinic this year.

The demand for our services continues to grow as we become an established and trusted resource in the local area. We are passionate about our commitment to help the local community and are keen to increase our services, particularly in the area of housing law advice, for which there is huge need. Of course, to manage this increase in services would require an expansion of our current team. This in turn would also allow us to supervise more students undertaking the case work. **The generosity and vision of our donor community is essential to the realisation of this goal, and we are calling on our supporters to help in any way possible.**

In a time where resources are scarce and all advice agencies are stretched, we are looking at ways to work more closely with other organisations in the borough. To this end, we have joined local networks of advice agencies and charities such as OneNewham and the Newham Youth Partnership. We are hoping to make more use of our space for community events and perhaps set up some additional services.

It is anticipated that the legal aid agency may re-tender for civil legal aid contracts in 2022. If this happens, we will be required to reapply for our current contracts. It also represents an opportunity to apply for other contracts, where we are able to secure the necessary funding to employ a supervisor and find someone to recruit. Ideally, we would be able to expand our services into offering immigration advice, which is desperately needed in the local area.

For more information, please visit:

www.ucl.ac.uk/access-to-justice