'Blossoming cherries'

Meeting regarding the Japanese University Endowment Fund

Presentation by Professor David Price, UCL Vice-Provost (Research)

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UCL–Japan links: historical (1 of 3)

1863: The Choshu Five arrive at
UCL:
Hirobumi Ito
Kaoru Inoue
Yozo Yamao
Masaru Inoue
Kinsuke Endo

1865: The Satsuma Group of 19
students and supervisors arrive at
UCL

UCL–Japan links: historical (2 of 3)

Other notable UCL alumni include:

- Junichiro Koizumi: Prime Minister of Japan, 2001–2006

- Natsume Soseki: distinguished modern Japanese novelist

- Mori Arionoi: founder of Japan's modern education system

- Joji Sakurai: first Professor of Chemistry at University of Tokyo, and the first non-British person to be made an Honorary Fellow of UCL

UCL–Japan links: historical (3 of 3)

2014: Prime Minister Shinzō Abe honours our joint history by visiting the Japan Monument at the centre of the UCL campus.

The names of the Choshu Five and the Satsuma Group are engraved on the stone monument next to an inscription reading:

はるばるとこころつどいてはなさかる
(Harubaru to kokoro tsudoite hana sakaru)

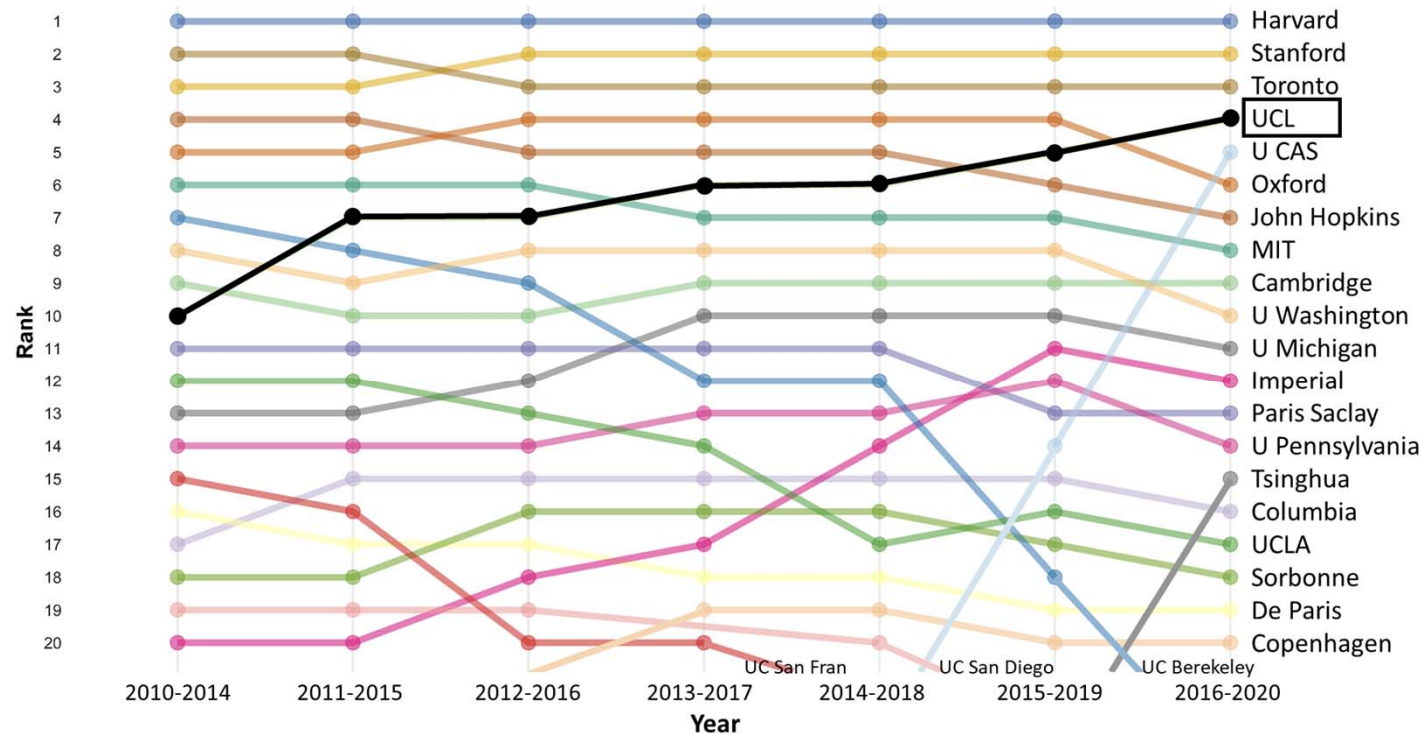*'When distant minds come together, cherries blossom'*

UCL–Japan links: contemporary

- average of >800 co-publications a year, 2016–2020

- five student exchange programmes

- multiple partners at the faculty level, with two key institutional partners: Osaka University and Tohoku University

- strong business links with Japanese companies including Eisai, Toyota, Hitachi, Takeda and Santen

Overview of UCL research (1 of 3)

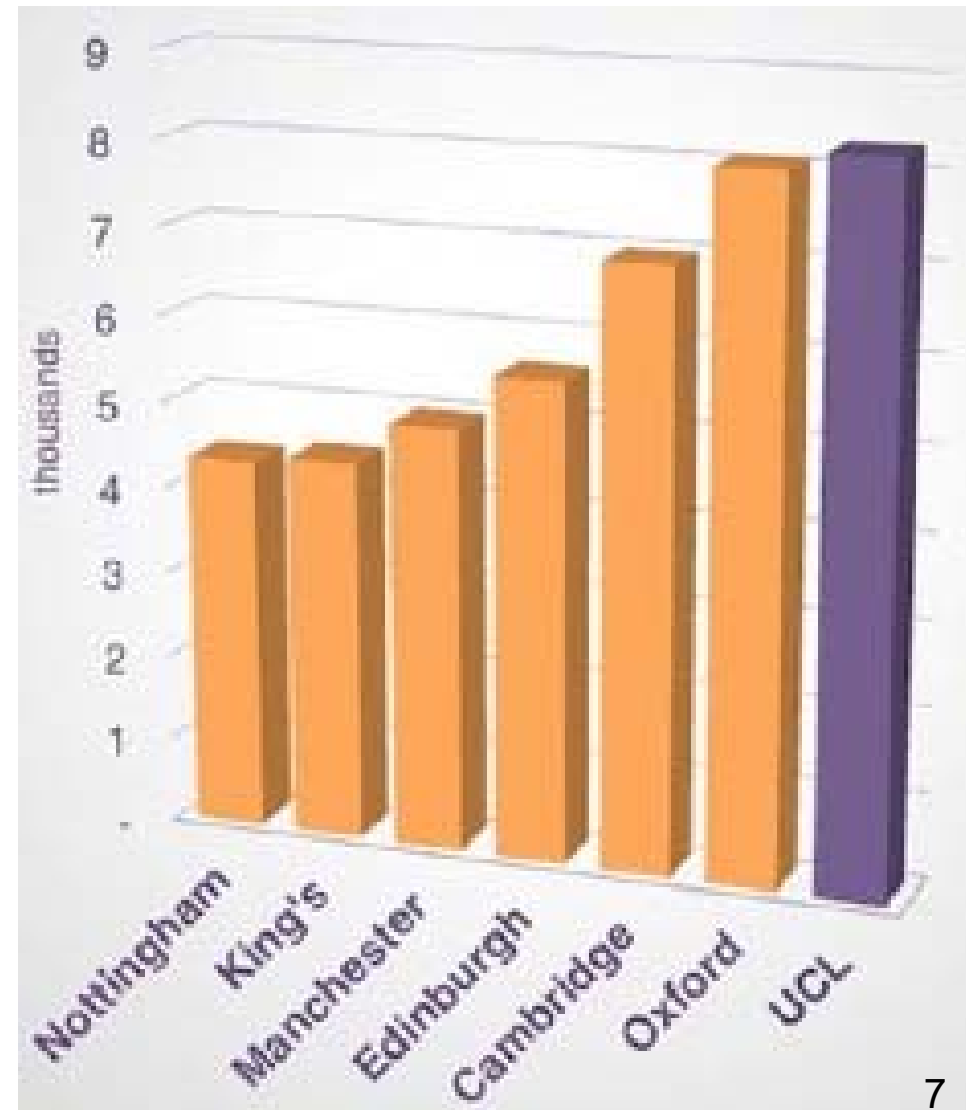## Risen to 4th in the world for citation rankings

Consistently ranked in the top six universities globally, by mean rank of five league tables:
Harvard
Stanford
Oxford
MIT
Cambridge
UCL

In most recent Research Excellence Framework (2014), rated 1st for 'research power' in each REF element (Outputs, Environment and Impact) and overall

'Research power':
Grade point average *x* full-time equivalent number of researchers

Overview of UCL research (3 of 3)

Pan-institutional initiatives
including:
- UCL Grand Challenges
- UCL Public Policy
- UCL Sustainable Development
  Goals Initiative
- UCL Press
- UCL Open Science &
  Scholarship

UCL Research Strategy

Aims

1. Inspire and empower research leadership

2. Cross boundaries to increase engagement

3. Deliver impact for public benefit

Cross-Cutting Themes

A. Pursue a responsible research agenda

B. Exert our institutional influence for the greater good

C. Maintain a global perspective

Reflections on the challenges facing Japanese research

Key factor?
Blockages in / precarious nature of early talent pipeline
- lack of PhD stipend funding
- lack of early career fellowships to develop independent thinking, and become a PI
- probably contributed to by an emphasis on hierarchy and seniority?

Lesser factors?
- decreased time for research (UCL ~ 40% on research)
- international recruitment difficulties due to low salary (environment key)
- effectiveness of internal assessment schemes (good appointment self motivate)

Issues to explore (1 of 2)

Support the development of early career researchers
- stipends to support PhD cohorts
- mechanisms to facilitate 'crossing boundaries for greater engagement'
- early academic independence… many more PIs.
- clear routes to promotion, recognize good citizenship.
- encourage diversity, and a collaborative research culture, and PhD is good for society and the economy not just academia

Enhance the 'internationality' of ECRs
- ECR fellowships including two years abroad and language training
- similar fellowships for PhDs:
  - e.g. 1 year in Japan, 1 year in UCL, 2 years in Japan
- publish in Open Access journals

Institutional Autonomy

Issues to explore (2 of 2)

(1) Role of the Research Excellence Framework (REF)
Only gives funding to reviewed excellence at unit level, not institutional reputation.

- effective at driving standards up, particularly through transparency and emphasis on quality over quantity
- as a determinant of funding and reputation, REF drives behaviour both institutionally and individually
- has driven greater attention to, for example, impact, open science and the dynamism and sustainability of research environments

(2) Role of university leaderships… to provide vision and challenge, and to Reform…. Like the Choshu 5.

- Eg… SDG, Grand Challenges, EDI, and Open publishing

Thank you

I welcome your comments or questions

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