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## 1. Scope of Report

This report evaluates the impact of the Grand Challenge of Transformative Technology (GCTT) event held at the Object-based learning lab (OBLL) and North Cloisters of UCL on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2023. The event was held in the context of UCL's 2022-2027 research strategy and growing institutional recognition of investigating the role of Transformative Technologies (TT), such as through the UKRI's £250 million investment in TTs. As part of the new strategy, the Grand Challenges (GC) initiative is evolving from six GCs to five, with TT being phased out as a discrete GC. The event was a starting point for conceiving how TTs underpin the five new GCs, and to continue thinking about how we might combine discussion on TTs with ideas of responsible innovation going forward at UCL.

The first section of the report explains the methods used for collecting data about the event and the rationale behind these methods. The second section briefly outlines the course of the GCTT event. The third section presents and discusses the outcomes of the data collection methods. The fourth section is a short personal reflection on my own experience as Evaluation and Impact Assistant as part of a short internship. The fifth and final section synthesises findings from the data collection and examines the future for GCTT and GC more broadly.

## 2. Methods

Three primary methods were used during the event and

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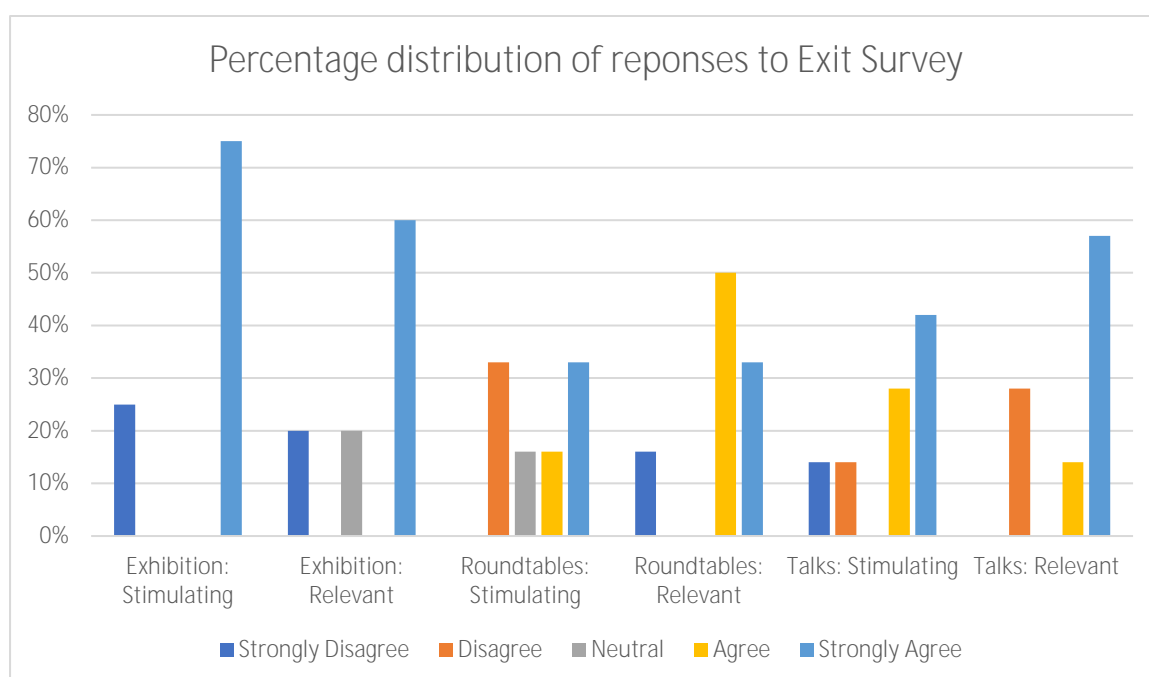
### 3. Course of the Day

The GCTT event itself consisted of three sections: a series of short talks from speakers of different departments on Transformative Technologies; roundtable discussions where attendees were split into four tables to discuss set questions before feeding back and discussing with the rest of the room; and a mini-exhibit on in North Cloisters where some attendees ran stalls on their research. As part of participant observation, I attended the short talks and took notes of content, before participating in



The rankings for how stimulating and relevant participants found each event are shown below as average scores. Higher rankings indicate more participants agreed with the statement, whilst lower rankings indicate less participants agreed.

The average scores indicate that the exhibition was the best-received section of the event by the metrics used, followed by the opening talks and the roundtable discussions. It should be noted that responses for the exhibition and opening talks were more widely distributed – i.e. most respondents agreed or agreed strongly that the exhibition was relevant and stimulating with few strongly disagreeing – whilst responses for the roundtable discussions were more around the ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘slightly agree’ and ‘slightly disagree’ options, implying a less polarised opinion; see the chart below for more detail. Indeed, in the further comments section the roundtables were praised with suggestions on how to improve, as shown below.



The final set of questions asked respondents for further comments on the event; for any direct plans they devised as a result of the event; and any thoughts on how the GCTT event might be improved going forward. Answers have been grouped into two categories: those that deal with the content of the event and those that deal with the logistics.

*(Content obscured by a large redacted area)*

Responses were generally positive, with respondents praising the event and especially the roundtable discussions. Suggestions focused on the accessibility of the venue and the structure and format of the roundtables. Below are excerpts from answers to give an idea of respondents' thoughts:

"The roundtable discussions were a terrific part of the afternoon"

"The main problem was the venue, which does not make it easy for attendees to find and enter"







Alongside a potential edited volume as described above, one interviewee expressed the value of publishing short history of Grand Challenges and its achievements so far. Another suggestion was for regular publication through a channel such as The Conversation alongside a published text to continue to publish ideas arising from GCTT and stimulate further discussion.<sup>3</sup>

On a separate note, Marina shared one participant's personal email to her, which provided much food for thought for the current structure, governance, and future development of the GCTT and GC more general. This is the excerpt:

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A participant made a further point to respond to the comment above that is worth sharing as it illustrates that we need more time and space for discussion and deliberation at UCL.

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## 5. Personal Reflection

This section breaks from the data collection and analysis to evaluate the experience of some of the interns. At the GCTT event, four interns supported the event: as Video Producer, Qi Wu produced a film for the event; as Events Assistant Yuyang Che assisted delivering the event on the day; as Communications Assistant, Sophia Dibbs created social media content and as Evaluation and Impact Assistant, Patrick Worsfold researched and reported on the impact of the event (as you are reading now). All interns were contacted for a short reflective piece on their time, though only Qi and Patrick provided responses, as below.



- 1) Host more events, including more informal receptions, for example. Attempt to reach out to specific departments when advertising the events and seek greater attendance from students on one end and senior management on the other.
- 2) The roundtable discussions were frequently praised by respondents, though suggestions were made to improve them. Future events could be oriented around roundtable discussions but with a specific, focused theme, such as AI or responsible innovation that were spoken about during the GCTT event.
- 3) Plan seating arrangements and specific questions in advance for roundtable discussions to encourage interdisciplinary conversations.
- 4) More time might be spent on the introductory talks to contextualise Grand Challenges and Transformative Technologies – though the introductory talks covered these, some respondents still indicated that they were unsure about the precise role of Transformative Technologies going forward.

## Appendix A: Detailed account of Roundtable Discussions and Mini-Exhibition

### Summary

Below is a detailed account of the roundtable discussions and mini-exhibition based on raw fieldnotes collected during the day. It represents a specific account of my own participant observation from Table 3 during the roundtables and from several hours visiting each stand at the Mini-Exhibition and speaking with attendees and those running the stalls. Conversations from other tables during the roundtables were recorded from the whole-room discussions as well as from Video Producer Qi Wu's raw footage.

### Detailed Account – Roundtables

Before the roundtable discussions, attendees broke out for a short coffee break. The discussion here was fruitful with the talks still fresh in everyone's mind; I managed to have a thorough discussion about the presenting the findings of the events as well as collaboration between the University and the Fine Arts.

Interdisciplinarity was a key topic during the event, and with attendees we brainstormed how this might be extended beyond the 'traditional' university to the fine arts: how can the disruptive potential of the fine arts be married with 'traditional' disciplines? What might we learn through continuous collaboration, rather than through singular collaborations such as a day-long event or an exhibition? Is such a thing possible when often it is 'science money' that funds such endeavours? Though we did not find an easy or concrete answer to these questions, the discussion offered a useful talking point going forward.



