

2020/21

Wellbeing
Representation
Network

Imperial
College
Union

Wellbeing Representatives

HANDBOOK



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Introduction

Congratulations on your election result and welcome to the Wellbeing Representation Network of Imperial College Union!

You are now part of a team of student representatives, and speak on behalf of hundreds of your student peers - representing them to Departmental and College staff, to Imperial College Union, and to the wider world. While the student experience continues to be mostly remote, it is now more important than ever for you to represent and raise the student voice.

We are grateful to each and every one of you for volunteering and dedicating your time to improving the wellbeing provisions, awareness of support services and social community within your department. Everyone at Imperial, including the President and Provost, recognises the importance of the Wellbeing Representation Network in improving and maintaining the student experience at Imperial College London.

To help you along the way, we provide you with training to make sure you are as effective and knowledgeable about your role as possible, as well as support you throughout the year. Being a Wellbeing Representative is a fantastic opportunity for personal and professional development, and allows

you to truly make an impact on the student experience.

This handbook is the primary resource to prepare you for the year ahead. It is complemented by online training inductions, as well as online resources available throughout the year, and the continued availability of me, staff and fellow student volunteers for advice and guidance.

We hope you have an amazing time this year, and make the most of all the opportunities that Imperial offers you, despite some of the challenges we all will be facing due to the unusual circumstances. If you ever have a question or need some advice, feel free to get in touch with us via email or on Teams.

Shervin Sabeghi

Deputy President (Welfare), 2020/21



The Wellbeing Representation Network

The Wellbeing Representation Network brings together student volunteers and departmental staff across all Undergraduate programmes in order to improve wellbeing provisions within departments at Imperial and act as a campaigning body, promoting messages about positive wellbeing.

Student Representation is a crucial and invaluable tool that enables the student community to shape their experiences and the Imperial institution as a whole. Imperial College is a high-performing, pressurised and fast-paced environment which can – at times – adversely affect the wellbeing of our students. The Rep network works with the College so departments can understand the issues students face outside of their academic studies, ensuring that the wellbeing of the Imperial community is valued.

The Network works as a body of about 90 student representatives who through their work ensure that students' wellbeing is valued by the College, giving it the same level of importance and consideration as academic excellence within each department. Through student representation, the network are responsible for identifying issues and raising awareness in five key areas affecting students: health, financial concerns, relationships, equality & diversity and personal safety.

The College recognised in its Learning and Teaching Strategy that a supportive environment is essential to fostering a sense of community and have vowed to enhance the supportive environment throughout the institution. This means that our College staff have demonstrated a commitment to listen to students' opinions, stories and experiences with the view of improving wellbeing provisions for the individual student experience and the entire Imperial community.

By acting on students' feedback, the network operates as a vessel for student-centric solutions to wellbeing issues within departments, faculties and across the institution as a whole. Wellbeing Reps are responsible for identifying and addressing issues effecting your university experience. They also work to proactively improve your experience, and that of future students, by coming up with new ideas and sharing best practices from different parts of the College.

Imperial College Union is committed to making student leaders who are empowered to make positive change within their communities. The Wellbeing Representation Network gives students the opportunity to become leaders, challenging systemic wellbeing issues within their cohorts and make tangible changes for the students they represent.



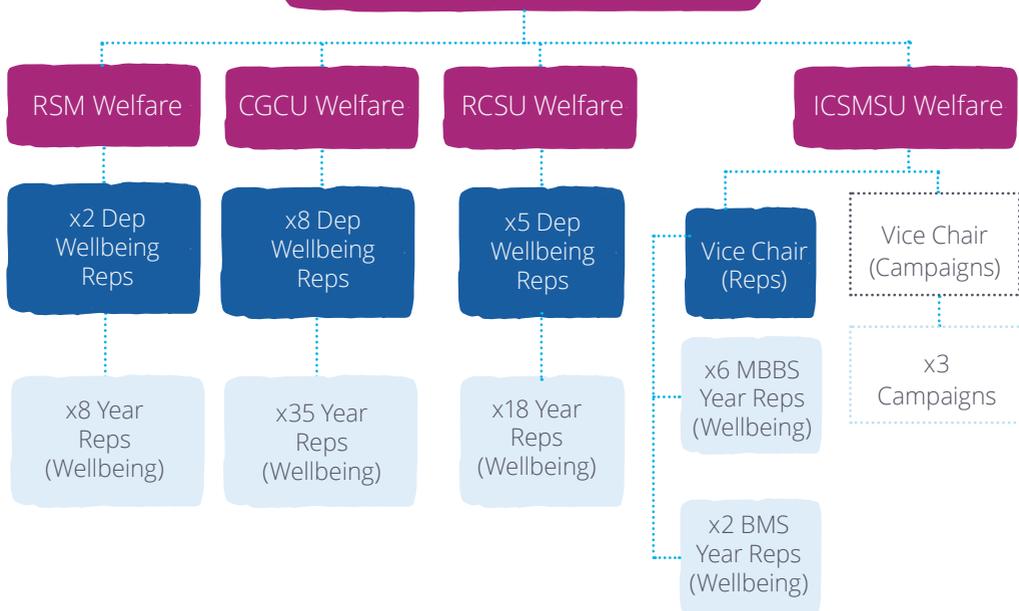
Roles, Responsibilities and Boundaries

YOUR ROLE

The Wellbeing Reps have three main responsibilities: the first is to collect feedback from students, regarding topics within their remit, and to alert university staff of issues affecting students' experience within their cohort. Secondly, reps will be responsible for promoting messages and encouraging conversations around positive wellbeing and healthy living. Equally as important, the network of reps will work across departments and faculties to communicate best practice to each other.

The network consists of Year Reps, Departmental Reps, Constituent Union Welfare Officers and the Deputy President (Welfare) at the Union. Within a department, Year and Departmental Reps will work together as "Rep teams" to raise issues at student-staff committees, campaign for change within their departments and promote messages around positive wellbeing.

Deputy President Welfare



YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- ▲ Make sure the students you represent know who you are and how they contact you
- ▲ Proactively seek out and identify students' views on matters relating to their wellbeing and support received at Imperial
- ▲ Represent the students on your programme and take their feedback and ideas to your departments and faculties
- ▲ Raise student feedback on both a formal and informal basis
- ▲ Attend student-staff committee meetings - often called SSCs or SSLGs - (or send apologies) and other informal meetings with academic staff, providing student feedback, opinion and ideas at these meetings
- ▲ Update the students you represent on outcomes of feedback raised and any responses you receive from staff
- ▲ Attend your Wellbeing Rep Induction
- ▲ Communicate with the Deputy President (Welfare) and the Education & Welfare team
- ▲ Refer students with individual issues to appropriate sources of help when necessary
- ▲ Work with fellow Wellbeing Reps, elected officers and staff on ideas and campaigns that will improve the student experience

YOUR BOUNDARIES

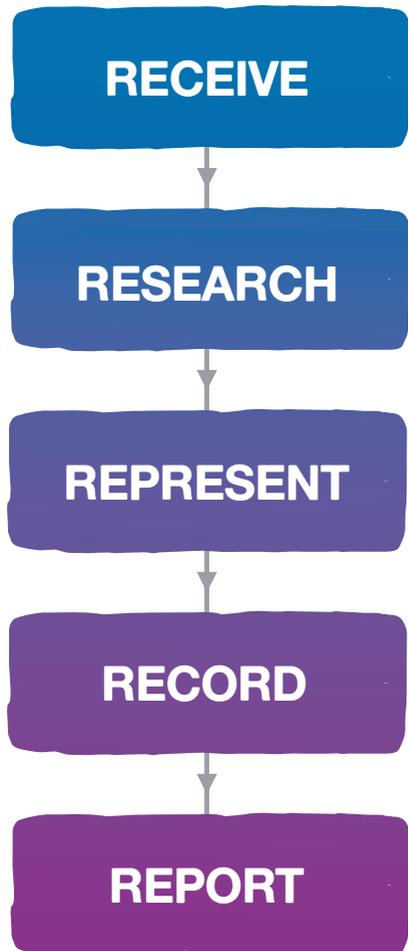
- ▲ It is not the duty of a Wellbeing Rep to personally support students through any procedures or difficulties they are facing. Students who have concerns in areas such as disciplinary issues, allegations of harassment or bullying, complaints or personal problems should be referred to Imperial College Union's Advice Centre
- ▲ If you have any concerns about a student, or your own wellbeing, speak to a member of staff at the Union as soon as possible

Contact details are available online via the Rep A to Z on the Union website.

How to be a Wellbeing Representative

You are responsible for making sure the student voice is heard within your department.

The basic principles of being an effective Wellbeing Representative are:



RECEIVE

The first step of being an effective Rep is to be well-known by the students who rely on you. Once you are elected, make yourself known by using emails, lecture shout outs, posters in communal spaces, and make clear to students that you are always available by email and are approachable in person.

Quick Wins:

- ▲ When elected, ask a lecturer for two minutes at the start or end of a lecture to introduce yourself
- ▲ Ask a Departmental Administrator to have access to your cohorts mailing list so you can introduce yourself via email
- ▲ Put your role and as your email signature – it will appear at the bottom of every email you send
- ▲ Download our Rep Photo-frame Template, insert your headshot and print these to display on your department noticeboard

RESEARCH

It is your responsibility to find out as much as you can about any issue raised to you. How many students does it affect? Has there been a recent change that caused it? What possible solutions are there? Find out as much as you can to prepare you for raising the issue in person with a member of staff.

Quick Wins:

- ▲ Use survey apps and mailing lists to talk to students you represent about these issues
- ▲ The Deputy President (Welfare) and Union staff are available for advice and support, and have experience of College and departmental policies. Contact them at any time – their contact details are at the end of this manual
- ▲ Talk to other Reps in your department and faculty – are they finding the similar issues? How have they researched more about the issue at Imperial?

REPRESENT

You represent your entire constituency – whether that's a year group, a department, or an entire faculty – and not just your personal opinion. Take care to verify that you are accurately conveying the views of the entire group, and not your own take on the situation.

Quick Wins:

- ▲ Emphasise your research and consultation when in discussions with departmental staff
- ▲ Let your constituency know what you are planning to say before each staff-student committee, so they can give you feedback beforehand
- ▲ Take care not to give the impression you are only representing yourself – avoid phrases like “I think...” or “In my opinion...”

RECORD

It is important that the work of our Wellbeing Representatives is recorded and shared across the whole network. Record all of your goals and your ongoing tasks in the eActivities SMART Goal tracker which will allow your colleagues to see your progress and enable you to track your work from any computer or device.

Quick Wins:

- ▲ Keep your Departmental Representative and Constituent Union Welfare Officer up to speed with major issues
- ▲ Schedule in time to meet with your Rep teams, the Deputy President (Welfare) and Union staff to talk about the issues that have been raised to you by your constituency
- ▲ Keep your role-related notes together, whether that's on paper or in electronic form. This will aid the handover process to your successor later on in the year

REPORT

If you've made a change, shout about it! Tell your peers through email or in person, log the task as completed online and report back to your staff-student committee. This is called "closing the feedback loop", and it's an important aspects of your role.

Quick Wins:

- ▲ Let the students who you represent know the outcome of any work you have done
- ▲ Send a termly update email to your constituency – keep it short, focus on the changes you have made, and remind the students that you are available
- ▲ Let your Deputy President (Welfare) or the Union's Wellbeing & Campaigns Coordinator know of any major successes – we will highlight big wins in our all-Rep emails, and the most active Reps may receive a Union Award at the end of the year

Decision Tree

FEEDBACK

Does it affect more than a few students?

YES

NO

Does it relate to your course?

Work with the student to raise the feedback directly themselves or if needed, signpost them to additional support

YES

NO

Is it urgent or can the problem be fixed immediately?

Work with students to raise the feedback to relevant teams and if nothing changes, think about starting a campaign. Contact the relevant elected officer for support and guidance

YES

NO

Contact your programme manager or the relevant staff

Raise it at your next SSC

Be an effective campaigner

An important part of the role for Wellbeing Rep teams is effective campaigning. Working together, Rep teams have the power to create tangible change within their departments and raise awareness about key issues affecting students at Imperial. Here are some top tips about effective campaigning:

Analyse the issue

- ▲ What are the root causes of the problem?
- ▲ What are the negative consequences of the problem?
- ▲ What is your vision to help solve the problem?

Develop a strategy

- ▲ What is your overarching aim?
- ▲ Who do you need to influence to bring about change?
- ▲ What actions do you need to take to reach your aim?

Plan ahead

- ▲ Use SMART goals when planning (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound)
- ▲ Write an action plan and delegate tasks to your team

Monitor progress

- ▲ Have your actions brought about the change you expected?
- ▲ Do you need to change your plan to help achieve your outcome?

Evaluate your impact

- ▲ Did the campaign have any unexpected outcomes?
- ▲ Have your actions addressed the issue you originally identified?
- ▲ Has the student experience improved?

Celebrate your success

- ▲ Did you achieve your aim? Shout about the changes you've influenced
- ▲ Tell people about the outcomes of your hard work even if it wasn't the intended outcome – you might inspire another campaign

SSCs/ SSLGs

Student Staff Committees (SSCs) or Student Staff Liaison Groups (SSLGs, for Medics) are key meetings for a Rep's calendar. A set of 'Good practice guidelines' exist and should be shared with you from your department ahead of your first SSC.

What is an SSC?

The purpose of an SSC meeting is to strengthen understanding and improve the flow of communication between staff and students. Through open dialogue they will promote high standards of education, training and student support in a cooperative and constructive atmosphere.

They also enable best practice to be shared between departments. As a Rep, you have the opportunity to express the views of your cohort to the department about academic, pastoral or other issues relating to your programme of study and also the broader student experience. You can also highlight aspects that students have enjoyed or benefitted from. It is important to canvass the views of the students before and to represent these at the meeting, closing the feedback loop and sharing the outcomes. (The 5 Rs!)

What is discussed at an SSC?

Not every student issue needs to be presented at an SSC (see Decision Tree). Below are typical agenda items or things which are useful to discuss in this forum.

- ▲ Quality and timelines of feedback
- ▲ National survey outcomes & changes
- ▲ Academic policy
- ▲ Personal Tutoring & pastoral care
- ▲ External examiner reports
- ▲ Academic business - good practice and issues needing consideration
- ▲ Reports from periodic reviews
- ▲ Communicating trends identified

- ▲ Quality assurance
- ▲ Matters relating to student experience
- ▲ Summary reports from Faculty Education Committees /Postgraduate Research Quality Committee

How often do SSCs meet?

Departments advertise the dates and times of your relevant SSC and you will receive an invitation. Your Head of Department is responsible for ensuring meetings are held. Undergraduate SSCs should meet at least twice in autumn and spring term, and once in summer term. Postgraduate SSCs should meet at least once per term. Additional meetings can be requested by both staff and students.

Agendas and minutes

The Chair and Director of Undergraduate/ Postgraduate Studies meets with Reps before the meeting to create an agenda, which should be circulated 10 working days before the meeting. You are responsible to collect items to be discussed from the students you represent by working together with your departmental Rep team. All students (not just Reps) should see the agenda ahead of the meeting. If actions arise, there will be an opportunity to report on progress at the next meeting. The Chair and Deputy Chair should work with other Reps to ensure that the department issues an appropriate response to all students. Year Reps are expected to communicate and discuss the outcomes with students.

Key Union Contacts

Deputy President (Welfare)
dpwelfare@imperial.ac.uk
02075948060

The Deputy President (Welfare) heads the Wellbeing Rep Network in order to see what issues are happening across the institution and ensure this feedback is reaching the highest levels of College.

Contact DPW about: anything in relation to your role

Representation Team
repstaff@imperial.ac.uk
02075945091

The Representation Team supports the Deputy President (Welfare) and Deputy President (Education), the Wellbeing Representation Network, Liberation Officers and student-led campaigns.

Contact the Representation Team about: running campaigns, working with Liberation Officers, issues with College staff, training needs, general concerns about the role or individuals

Advice Centre
advice@imperial.ac.uk
02075948067

The Advice Centre offers professional, impartial and free advice to students on a range of issues – from academic problems to housing, money and consumer rights issues.

Contact the Advice Centre about: academic appeal and withdrawal procedures; referring a student with personal problems for professional support

Checklist

Do you know who the following people are, and how to contact them? All of their details are available via the Rep A to Z on the Union website.

- ▲ Deputy President (Welfare)
- ▲ Representation Team
- ▲ All other Reps in your department
- ▲ Head of Department
- ▲ Director of Undergraduate Studies
- ▲ Senior Tutor
- ▲ Undergraduate Administrator

Have you introduced yourself to relevant people within your department?

Do you represent students on multiple campuses?

Do you know which committees you are expected to attend?

Have you put meeting dates and deadlines into your calendar?

Do you know how to communicate with the students you represent?

Have you introduced yourself to the students you represent?



Find us:

Beit Quadrangle
Prince Consort Road
London
SW7 2BB
Registered Charity No: 1151241

Contact us:

Tel: 020 7594 8060
Email: union@imperial.ac.uk
Reception: Level 2, Beit Quad

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