

Council
16th November 2009

Report to Council

Jonathan Silver, Deputy President (Education)

Admissions

About two thirds of the undergraduate admissions tutors agreed on Tuesday that raising the GCSE English requirement to grade B was a good idea in order to improve standards of English communication. I challenge whether getting a grade C in English means that you have a poor command of the language, and whether getting a B or above really means you have a good command. I got an A but I was predicted a C and I have no problems speaking or writing English! I raised this to the Undergraduate Admissions Committee, who said there are limited ways to judge an applicant's English skills, but following my challenge they are going to consult the English language support staff who will possibly give them a better idea.

Student Written Submission

I finally have all contributions and have compiled a final draft, which will be passed at this meeting (with few or no amendments, I hope) in order to be submitted on Friday (the 20th). This is a massive relief and when this has gone, I will be able to do a lot more Proper Work.

SOLE, MOLE, ROLE, TOLE, POLE

These stand for the following:

Student (undergraduate teaching)
Masters (taught postgraduate teaching)
Research (research postgraduate supervision)
Tutorial (quality of personal tutorials)
Pastoral (UG first years only)
...Online Evaluation.

These surveys have been thoroughly revised following recommendations from statisticians in the Mathematics Department in order that they be statistically sound and promote the most useful responses possible. The new format of these surveys will be presented at Representation and Welfare Board on Thursday for approval and the papers will be online at the time of this (today's) meeting.

Year rep training

Last Monday night we held training for all taught course year reps across College. As far as I understand, this is a first! With a turnout of over 60 people, the evening was a great success and I

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hope our academic representatives will be able to do their job with confidence and vigour. Particular thanks to Phil Power for administrating it.

Mitigating Circumstances followup

The feedback from the highly productive discussion on the new Mitigating Circumstances policy at last Council was reported directly to the Quality Assurance Advisory Committee on Thursday alongside the policy itself, which they were invited to approve.

I've noted the following points from QAAC addressing the concerns raised here at Council:

- Another party (e.g. Senior Tutor) filling in the form on the student's behalf is entirely acceptable.
- The Board of Examiners must take final arbitration over all examination decisions – by definition.
- However, it is very much 'not the norm' for anything substantive to be discussed at the Board, and concerns that a large, disinterested body might be left to make a decision uninformed are unfounded as this is a very unlikely situation.
- The Working Party report states the following in its recommendations explicitly:
4.4.2 That the minimum amount of information necessary be disclosed to the Board of Examiners and that advisory panels normally include at least one member of the relevant Board to compensate for this.

ICBS representation

Student representation in the Business School is currently inadequate, due to the lack of a Postgraduate Rep for the Business School, and the lack of a number of course reps. I am working hard with the Graduate Students' Association to try and fix this.

Halitosis

In the latest Academic Staff Welfare Forum, the issue of students with bad breath was discussed and it was minuted that the poor conditions which many academics were working under are exacerbated by students who just don't clean their teeth. They have drafted a proposal to be presented to next Senate of some changes in academic and admissions regulations, of which the most pungent point was that it was necessary to introduce a breath examination in the summer for all undergraduate students, with a pass mark of 40% as usual, where a pass is necessary for progression/graduation. It is very likely that this will be approved at Senate. I, however, believe there are some serious issues surrounding this proposal, hence I will be proposing an amendment obliging Personal Tutors to provide toothbrushes free of charge (the kind with the rubbery handles) and, in the case of attractive students, offer the service of ICU sabbatical officers in this examination process.

iTunesU

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The e-Learning Committee has been examining the possibility of introducing iTunesU as a teaching tool at Imperial. There will be an agenda item covering this later. However, as a related matter, the e-Learning Committee would like to know what form students would like to be able to receive streamed video in. Some suggestions are:

Streamed MPEG (eg. .m3u)

RealVideo (.rm)

Flash (not supported by iPhones and iPod Touches) (.swf)

If you have any feeling or comments, please pass them to me and I will forward them to the e-Learning Committee.