

Imperial College Union's Response to College Day Extension Proposals

Overview

In December, the Union was to be a part of this working group. We were also informed of the proposed changes to the College day, including:

1. PG teaching *could* run until 8pm on Monday and Thursday.
2. UG teaching *could* run from 8am until 7pm on Monday and Thursday.
3. The new Imperial Humanities/Business etc *could* be offered from 6 pm to 8 pm but on a voluntary basis.
4. *Perhaps* having teaching during lunchtimes i.e. 1hr lunch breaks on certain days instead of 2hr.

Furthermore, some reasons for these changes are listed:

1. Ease of timetabling.
2. Using lecture theatres more effectively.
3. Ease travel arrangements (avoid rush hour).
4. Open up the opportunity to establish Biz Imperial, Arts Imperial, and Humanities Imperial which can be offered from 18:00 – 20:00.
5. Increase flexibility.
6. More campus life later in the evening.

These proposals need to be considered very carefully, since certain decisions could potentially put off some of the best students from coming to Imperial especially if there is only very limited time set aside for personal development outside the College day. That said, we understand the timetabling issues and are keen to work with this group to solve these without compromising the student experience. The Union is generally unclear on how much forethought has been put into this proposal, and we are looking forward to hearing your opinions on our concerns.

Outlined below are details on how these proposals will directly impact the students of Imperial in Education, Welfare and Extracurricular Activities.

Education

Humanities

- Moving the humanities lunch hour will make the choices less popular to students. Rather than being seen as a welcome (and needed) extension to a science degree, it will be considered a chore.

Lectures

- 9:00 lectures are poorly attended ergo the attendance at 8:00 lectures will be even lower.
- Lecturers may already have difficulties getting in for 9:00 (they have young families; live a reasonable distance away, etc). How likely are they to appreciate this change?
- Have the lecturers been consulted on their opinions?

- How will College ensure that lectures aren't scheduled from 8:00 until 19:00 (11hrs) without breaks? Alternately, how can it be ensured that breaks between lectures are minimised, so that students do not spend unnecessarily long hours in College – "spacing the day out"?
- In Mechanical Engineering, project management clashes with Maths i.e. cannot be taken simultaneously. Argument for spacing out the day.
- Does this mean that further BEST courses could be offered? Currently many students do not get into their first choice options.

Other

- Student groups use lunchtime slots and post-lecture time to work on their projects/group work. Changing the College hours would have an impact on this.
- Weakened student representation - CSB, Union Council, Exec and RWB meetings would potentially have to start at 20:00 to guarantee good representation.
- If the college day is extended, could exams potentially take place at 8:00 or finish at 20:00?
- Will affect attendance for careers events with external companies; many representatives will be unwilling to hold a careers talk from 20:00.
- Lab technicians, lecturers etc. will be asked to stay late.

Welfare

Demoralise Students & Safety Issues

- Students (just like anyone) need free time to enjoy their hobbies. It is not right for an institution to restrict them in this (whether unnecessarily overworking them, or pushing their activities into the late hours of the night).
- Many students prefer to study at home; they will be disadvantaged.
- Students which live a considerable distance from campus will have major problems getting to early morning lectures.
- Getting home later at night also presents an increased personal safety risk, particularly in the winter and the fact that students tend to live in less well off areas.
- Students and lecturers who have children may need to be at home during the time in the morning and evening that is currently free. Nursery opening hours fit around the average working day of 8:00 to 18:00, although many nurseries operate from 6:00 to 19:00. School opening hours are usually 8:00 – 16:00. It is possible that in a longer day students will have to leave home too early to drop their children off to nursery or school, and finish too late to be able to collect them, resulting in increased childcare costs and inconvenience.

Life on Campus

- Cafes close earlier (apart from Library cafe) – would the JCR/SCR/Departmental Cafes stay open longer?
- Library is busy in the evenings, as are the Student Union facilities.

Extracurricular Activities

Over half the student population are currently a member of at least one club these changes would certainly have a non-trivial effect on student activities. Extending the teaching day as suggested would require a change to our agreement about which spaces we can book directly. Currently, we can book directly into most departments after 18:00. If that is say changed to 20:00 that would impact approx. 50% of all the bookings currently made. This means extra work for Departmental Administrators and mainly us – it would certainly have a staff impact at the Union. This point also ignored the fact that students would be exhausted after (potentially) spending 11 hours in College.

Room bookings

- 2010 the Union received 8,344 room booking requests (5,342 College rooms, 3,002 Union)
- Only 5,338/ 64% successful (3,865/72% College rooms, 1473/ 49% Union rooms)
- Of the room booking made in College, 907/23% were on either Monday or Thursday (18:00 - 19:00) – all but 10 of these bookings extended until 20:00 or later.
- Therefore over 1/5 of the successful C&S rooms bookings in College **may** have to be moved to another time due to teaching commitments in the rooms they are using.
- This increases to 48% if the PG teaching proposal change is included.
- The true answer (worst case) would probably lie between the two i.e. 30%-35% (**this is conjecture only and doesn't consider if the proposed changed would not affect the activity space in Medicine**). This data does not include conference spaces (Great Hall, SCR, Tower Rooms etc.), the JCR (used every night from 18:00 by us) or sports facilities.

Participation in Clubs & Societies

- Students actively participating in Clubs have lunchtime meetings which would have to be rescheduled.
- Shows, concerts, rehearsals etc. will all have to start much later than currently so that people can get there from lectures, this will also result in fewer instances of being able to hold rehearsals sequentially. Currently some spaces are currently booked sequentially by 3 different groups in one evening.

ULU Sports leagues

- Fixtures can start at 6pm on a Monday (league rules) – College actively encourages participation in these leagues.
- Reduce performance – Imperial already performs well above its weight with a small student population and heavy timetable (best London Sports team ranking).

Recommendations

- How much have inter-Departmental booking been considered? Can the College expand on what they already offer? Data?
- Union is very effective at accommodating many student groups with our limited space, can College improve?
- Instead of proposing to lengthen the College day, is it not worth investing money into improving our current facilities?
- Possibility of reducing the lunchtime slot to 1 hour on certain days? Effect on Humanities?
- Allow time to ask the wider student population and lecturers on their views about this.