

Council
11 March 2014

Student Consultation Framework- For Discussion

David Goldsmith- Union President

Introduction

Running for the position of Union President I promised, in my manifesto, to “Demand a new mechanism to ensure student consultation from the outset of College decision-making” and in doing so help prevent situations like North Acton¹ happening again. I am developing this framework (Appendix) in order to fulfill this promise.

The aim of the framework is to standardise what students and staff together believe constitutes ‘appropriate consultation with students’ based on the impact of a decision being made. The framework produces for the user recommended consultation methods and avenues for acting on them. By doing this we set a minimum standard for how and how much students are consulted on decisions that affect them.

I have so far individually consulted with student reps and 15 senior members of College staff² in order to produce a workable draft. I am now bringing this draft to Union Council, the Union newsletter, Felix and my blog to give students the opportunity to feed back with their thoughts. This will heavily inform what the next draft will look like. I will also be presenting it for feedback to more College staff (including the Rector and the Provost), at the four Faculty Teaching Committees, three quality committees, the Provost’s Board, College Senate and College Council³ before running a campaign to make people aware of it- this will include training student officers in its use.

Not only does undergoing such a thorough consultation in developing a ‘consultation framework’ avoid hypocrisy, it also ensures that this framework has true buy-in and input from all stakeholders and will therefore be trusted as a useful tool. This will ensure that students are given greater input into decision making before decisions are made.

NB. The introduction contained in the document itself describes the aims of the framework in greater detail

Questions I would like you to consider

I’m looking to get feedback or suggestions on any part of the mechanism and its implementation. I have though included some ideas for specific feedback that would be particularly useful for me:

1. Do you agree with the impact level each example has been placed against? (pg. 6 + 7)
2. Do you feel that the consultation methods recommended are appropriate for each impact level? (pg. 10-17)
3. Do you agree with the guidance given throughout the document?

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References

1. Read about the Union's #AgainstActon campaign last year here:
<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/campaigns/accommodation>
2. Those who have so far been consulted and their feedback incorporated into this draft:
 - Debra Humphris, Vice Provost (Education)
 - Denis Wright, Director of Student Support
 - Muir Sanderson, Chief Financial Officer
 - Dean Pateman, Academic Registrar
 - Simon Archer, College Tutor
 - Jonathan Narcross and JP Jones, College Communications
 - Lorraine Craig, Department of Earth Science and Engineering
 - Stephen Richardson, Associate Provost (Institutional Affairs)
 - Bridgette Duncombe, Department of Chemistry
 - Jenny Higham, Vice Dean (Education and Institutional Affairs), Faculty of Medicine
 - Jon Tucker, Faculty Operating Officer, Business School
 - Jeremy Bradley, Department of Computing
 - Emma Caseley and Jemma Allan, Education Office
 - Mike Russell and Saul Batzofin, ICT
 - Simon Harding-Roots, Chief Operations Officer
 - Rachel Hounslow and William Brown, Student Academic Representatives, Department of Chemical Engineering
3. Details on College committees can be found here:
 - <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/committees>
 - <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/secretariat/collegegovernance/governancestructure>

Student Consultation Framework



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Introduction

Imperial College is a dynamic organisation, with decisions being taken regularly, at all levels, to ensure that the College continues to grow, develop and improve. It's well established that continuous change is essential to the development of any organisation, but it is also well established, within Higher Education, that effective student engagement improves outcomes for institutions and for students¹. These outcomes manifest themselves in terms of academic attainment, retention, social capital and student satisfaction.

Imperial College Union, as the voice for all students at the College, believes that effective student consultation at all levels is not only desirable for the above reasons, but also leads to better decision-making, especially when applied proactively. To this end we have developed this Consultation Framework. It has been developed to act as a resource for departments in order to provide a suggested approach for efficient and effective decision-making, with student consultation applied in a proportionate and relevant manner.



To provide a suggested approach for efficient and effective decision-making

The framework enables the user to produce a series of suggested consultation methods to be completed as a

guideline, flexible according to circumstance, relating to the potential impacts of the decision being made. The level of consultation the platform recommends has been standardised according to balanced feedback from large numbers of College staff and students, as well as College and Union committees. This framework does not attempt to change the best practice which already happens in many departments but rather sets to determine a minimum standard for consultation, agreed by all affected parties, which, should they wish to, departments can set themselves against without confusion as to what constitutes 'consultation'. In setting this standard disputes can be avoided between staff and students as to whether appropriate consultation has taken place.



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An online version of this framework will be available once published..

imperialcollegeunion.org



¹ Source: HE Academy

This will be an entirely positive process. If the methods recommended are completed, the Union will award the consultation a Mark of Approval, as well as making it eligible for further prizes such as 'Best Consultation of the Year'. It is important to stress that this will not be approval for the decision made, but rather for the process of consultation which was used to reach the decision.



This is not an approval for the decision made, but rather for the process of consultation

The Union will provide support to individuals and departments in both the application of the framework and, crucially, in the facilitation of the consultation process, with particular consideration given to departments who may lack the resources to consult to the standard advised. For those who are less familiar with the Union, the platform contains guidance regarding the Union representation structures and what help is available.

Based on my central manifesto pledge running for the position of ICU President and fitting in perfectly with the objectives of the College's Education and Student Strategy ² this framework is responding to a genuine call for best-practice student consultation across the College and presents the opportunity for the Union and the College to act in partnership to achieve this. The Union will be applying the method to the decisions it itself makes on a regular basis as well as providing strong avenues for feedback to initiate a review of the framework each year.

Without necessarily being exhaustive, by improving consultation, this framework will reduce unintended consequences and the chance of needing to rework changes. We believe that it will legitimise decision-making, manage student expectations and ultimately produce better outcomes.

How to achieve the 'Mark of Consultation'

1

Contact the Union President at union.president@ic.ac.uk who will assign you a Union contact (a Sabbatical Officer) based on the context of the consultation.

2

Agree success criteria with the Union contact based on the framework. Consultation methods may be added or removed as agreed appropriate by both parties.

3

Complete the consultation.

4

Achieve the 'Mark of Consultation' if success criteria completed.

¹ Source: HE Academy

² Education and Student Strategy objectives:

- 3.4 Extend our systematic mechanisms to encourage innovation and the sharing of good practice aimed at enhancing our delivery of education and the student experience
- 3.5 Implement a student survey and feedback framework which will rationalise the current range of surveys, systematically inform enhancement and create a robust feedback loop to students and staff

What Impact will your decision have?

Using the guide on the bottom of the page and, considering the change you are looking to consult on, where on the scale do you think you are?

	Colour	Education Examples	Student Activities Examples	Welfare Examples	Facilities & Campuses Examples	Residence Examples	Union Examples	ICT Examples
<p>Major Impact</p> <p>A change which has a long lasting major day-to-day effect on the life of students for the duration of their relationship with Imperial. A change likely to be very opinion influencing and potentially opinion forming when students reflect on their time at Imperial.</p>	<p>Red</p> <p>See pages 14 & 15</p>	Removing a department/unit/lab, Removing entire course which will affect current students, Extending the length of the teaching day,	Major reduction in funds, services, opportunities that underpin the existence of any student group(s)	Significantly altering the Wardening Service	Closure of a common room/social facility,	Purchasing or closing a new hall of residence	Union space being relocated, review of democratic of governance structures	Removal or introduction of a major ICT service for example e-learning
<p>Moderate Impact</p> <p>A change which has a time limited, but major, effect on the life of students. A change likely to be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial.</p>	<p>Orange</p> <p>See pages 12 & 13</p>	Change in range of course options/streams/modules, Changing PhD student's supervisors, Removing a course which won't affect current students, Significant change in support for professional development	Removal of equipment central to activity, Change in facilities that affect the core activity of the student group(s)	Change in the level of service at the health centre	Walkway redevelopment, opening of a new catering outlet on campus	Temporary closing of a hall/wing for refurbishment, major changes to the wardening system	Redefining sabbatical officer roles, changes to services offered	Change to software platform or service provision
<p>Minor Impact</p> <p>A change which will affect the lives of students for a short period but which will have little ongoing impact once embedded. A change which may be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial.</p>	<p>Yellow</p> <p>See pages 11 & 12</p>	Changing advertised coursework deadline, Moving exam dates, Change in personal tutor/tutor group	Refurbishment of room or storage area which will return to original purpose after short period. Has short-term impact on student group(s)'s ability to function	Relocating chaplaincy, change in service operating hours	Refurbishment of a room regularly used by students, removal or addition of a Careers event	Changing cleaning provision in the halls, annual review of halls rent, change to opening hours of Ethos	Change to opening hours of a service or outlet	Alteration to email mailbox quota/printer credit
Communication Only Required								
<p>Inform affected users</p> <p>A day-to-day change in operational practice with no ongoing effect on the lives of students. A change which in no way should be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial.</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>See pages 10 & 11</p>	One off time or room change for lecture or class,	Room change for club activity as long as alternative room is fit for purpose	Change of contact details for the disability advisory service	Replacing furniture, closure of a building over a weekend	Closing cooking/washing facilities for professional cleaning for a short period	Updating e-activities	Planned system outage

Guide to the scale...

- Use the examples provided as a guideline to ascertain the appropriate impact factor.
- User(s): A generic term. It applies in the traditional sense (eg. of a library), but also to potential users, members of a cohort group, residents of a hall, members of a club, students within a certain demographic etc.
- When deciding on the appropriate impact factor it is useful to bear in mind the percentage or number of user(s) or potential user(s) affected. What may seem to be a low impact change may be interpreted by students as high impact, by virtue of the fact that it affects a large number of users.
- If in doubt always go higher

Some points to bear in mind

In the situation that an unforeseen circumstance were to arise where, due to genuine urgency, it is not possible for full consultation as outlined in this document to occur, and it is not reasonable to expect proactive consultation to have taken place, you may still achieve the award provided that you indicate that you have gone out of your way to complete as many of the recommended methods as possible.

If a situation arises which is not covered by this document, or that refers to sensitive information we would appreciate it if you would contact the ICU President to discuss how best to handle it. It may be possible to work with the Union to consult with students whilst keeping the information confidential

What are Student Officers?

We refer to all elected student representatives as Student Officers. These include, but are not limited to:

- Sabbatical Officers
- Academic Reps
- Club, Society & Project Officers and Committee members
- Liberation Officers

Detailed guidance of our Union representative structures will be made available online.

Inform Affected Users

INFORM AFFECTED USERS

A day-to-day change in operational practice with no ongoing effect on the lives of students. A change which in no way should be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial. Normally little or no consultation with students is necessary.

RECOMMENDED TIMESCALE

Complete all agreed methods as soon as possible and normally not on the day of the change.

Recommended Consultation Methods

It is recommended that all of these methods are completed.

Consultation methods (increasing level)	How to evidence completion of method
Engage affected students in advance of the proposed change with a route for reply	Communicate via Student Officers
Engage Student Officers and discuss with them if appropriate	Communicate via Student Officers

Minor Impact

MINOR IMPACT

A change which will affect the lives of students for a short period but which will have little ongoing impact once embedded. A change which may be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial. An appropriate consultation process is needed.

RECOMMENDED TIMESCALE

Complete all agreed methods before decision is made. Normally begin consultation process one month or more in advance of decision.

Recommended Consultation Methods

It is recommended that all of these methods are completed.

Consultation methods (increasing level)	How to evidence completion of method
Engage affected students in advance of the proposed change with a route for reply	Communicate via Student Officers
Work with Student Officers to gather student opinion	Communicate via Student Officers
Use data from SOLE (Student Online Evaluation) if appropriate *Relevant only to academic departments	Communicate via Student Officers
Refine ideas after consultation and then re-seek opinion with a method(s) agreed with Student Officers/ICU contact. You may find that when reflecting on student feedback you realise that you had not chosen the appropriate impact factor. In this case it is recommended that you switch to the appropriate impact factor and complete any additional consultation methods recommended.	Communicate via Student Officers
Before making the decision close the feedback-loop by communicating to students what they fed back to you and how you have incorporated the feedback into your decision	Communicate via Student Officers

It is recommended that at least 1 of these methods are completed.

Consultation methods (increasing level)	How to evidence completion of method
Seek the opinion of a sabbatical officers	Correspondance with the Union contact
Conduct a call for ideas and opinions with the help of Student Officers	Share findings and methodology with Student Officers
Conduct a survey (designed in tandem with reps or ICU contact)/ Feed into a pre-existing survey (Link to guidance on existing surveys)	Share findings and methodology with Student Officers

Work out exactly what it is you are consulting on and why. Make sure to ask the right questions.

Consult with all students who are affected by the change. Think about knock-on effects- some students may be affected that you would not at first have considered.

Gather Evidence from at least two sources.

Keep the process of consultation fully transparent and communicate it to the students.

If you are having trouble implementing the recommended consultation methods due to lack of access to students/lack of resource please contact ICU President at union. president@ic.ac.uk

Moderate Impact

MODERATE IMPACT

A change which has a time limited, but major effect on the life of students. A change likely to be opinion influencing when students reflect on their time at Imperial. A moderately sized consultation process is necessary.

RECOMMENDED TIMESCALE

Complete all agreed methods before decision is made. Normally begin consultation process two months or more in advance of decision.

Recommended Consultation Methods

It is recommended that all of these methods are completed.

Consultation methods (increasing level)	How to evidence completion of method
Engage affected students in advance of the proposed change with a route for reply	Communicate via Student Officers
Work with Student Officers to gather student opinion	Communicate via Student Officers
Use data from SOLE (Student Online Evaluation) if appropriate *Relevant only to academic departments	Communicate via Student Officers
Seek the opinion of the sabbatical officers	Correspondance with the Union contact
Before making the decision close the feedback-loop by communicating to students what they fed back to you and how you have incorporated the feedback into your decision	Communicate via Student Officers
Work with your ICU contact on how to best communicate the decision to students	Corresponance with the Union contact
Refine ideas after consultation and then re-seek opinion with a method(s) agreed with Student Officers/ICU contact. You may find that when reflecting on student feedback you realise that you had not chosen the appropriate impact factor. In this case it is recommended that you switch to the appropriate impact factor and complete any additional consultation methods recommended.	Communicate via Student Officers

It is recommended that at least 2 of these methods are completed.

Consultation methods (increasing level)	How to evidence completion of method
Hold open meetings	Share findings and methodology with Student Officers
Conduct a call for ideas and opinions with the help of Student Officers	Share findings and methodology with Student Officers
Seek the opinion of a relevant Union committee if one exists (Link to guidance on Union repretative structure)	Commiteeee minutes
Put together and work with, in tandem with Student Officers, a representative focus group containing students	Share findings and methodology with Student Officers
Conduct a survey (designed in tandem with reps or ICU contact)/ Feed into a pre-existing survey (Link to guidance on existing surveys)	Share findings and methodology with Student Officers

Work out exactly what it is you are consulting on and why. Make sure to ask the right questions.

Consult with all students who are affected by the change. Think about knock-on effects- some students may be affected that you would not at first have considered.

Gather Evidence from a few sources and possibly globally from outside the institution.

Keep the process of consultation fully transparent and communicate it to the students.

If you are having trouble implementing the recommended consultation methods due to lack of access to students/lack of resource please contact ICU President at union. president@ic.ac.uk to discuss how ICU can help.

Major Impact

MAJOR IMPACT

A change which has a long lasting major day-to-day effect on the life of students for the duration of their relationship with Imperial. A change likely to be very opinion influencing and potentially opinion forming when students reflect on their time at Imperial. A large scale consultation process is necessary.

RECOMMENDED TIMESCALE

Complete all agreed methods before decision is made. Normally begin consultation process four months or more in advance of decision.

Recommended Consultation Methods

It is recommended that all of these methods are completed.

Consultation methods (increasing level)	How to evidence completion of method
Engage affected students in advance of the proposed change with a route for reply	Communicate via Student Officers
Work with Student Officers to gather student opinion	Communicate via Student Officers
Use data from SOLE (Student Online Evaluation) if appropriate *Relevant only to academic departments	Communicate via Student Officers
Seek the opinion of the sabbatical officers	Correspondance with the Union contact
Before making the decision close the feedback-loop by communicating to students what they fed back to you and how you have incorporated the feedback into your decision	Communicate via Student Officers
Work with your ICU contact on how to best communicate the decision to students	Corresponance with the Union contact
Refine ideas after consultation and then re-seek opinion with a method(s) agreed with Student Officers/ICU contact. You may find that when reflecting on student feedback you realise that you had not chosen the appropriate impact factor. In this case it is recommended that you switch to the appropriate impact factor and complete any additional consultation methods recommended.	Communicate via Student Officers
Officially present and seek opinion at a relevant Union committee or Union Council (Link to guidance on Union reprentative structure)	Commiteee minutes

It is recommended that at least 2 of these methods are completed- however there should be either a consultation group or a survey used.

Consultation methods (increasing level)	How to evidence completion of method
Hold open meetings	Share findings and methodology with Student Officers
Conduct a call for ideas and opinions with the help of Student Officers	Share findings and methodology with Student Officers
Put together and work with, in tandem with Student Officers, a representative focus group containing students	Share findings and methodology with Student Officers
Conduct a survey (designed in tandem with reps or ICU contact)/ Feed into a pre-existing survey (Link to guidance on existing surveys)	Share findings and methodology with Student Officers

Work out exactly what it is you are consulting on and why. Make sure to ask the right questions.

Consult with all students who are affected by the change. Think about knock-on effects- some students may be affected that you would not at first have considered.

Gather evidence from a wide range of sources, including globally from outside the institution.

Keep the process of consultation fully transparent and communicate it to the students.

If you are having trouble implementing the recommended consultation methods due to lack of access to students/lack of resource please contact ICU President at union. president@ic.ac.uk to discuss how ICU can help.

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