

Report to Union Council

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General Matters

- I have spent at least half a day each month at Hammersmith Hospital campus, including one day so far in November, where I met with students, Reps and staff alongside remote-working. This is part of my commitment to spend some time each month working from our auxiliary campuses

Academic Representation Network

- A by-election to fill outstanding Rep positions in the Department of Computing is ongoing. An election for Imperial Horizons Reps is also ongoing
- We now have on record >60% of our Postgraduate Taught Reps and ~50% of our Postgraduate Research Reps (by the time of Council, this number is likely to have increased even further, as names of Reps have been coming in at a fast pace over the past few days)
 - I believe being able to reach this stage in less than five weeks into term is quite an achievement for us and highlights our renewed commitment to PG representation; in comparison, I understand that in the previous year it took several months to reach a similar stage
- Our training for Reps are continuing. The new skills-based, scenarios-based approach have been positively received with sessions receiving a 'positive' to 'highly positive' rating.
 - In the sessions that I had helped out with, I was very impressed by the level of engagement shown by many of the Reps, as they expressed competency in a number of areas such as leadership, communication and team-working
 - For our PGT and PGR Reps, we will be working with the Graduate School to deliver three further specialist sessions based on the themes of "influencing people", "chairing meetings" and "understanding the HE landscape"
- A lite Rep Week is going on this week, to encourage our UG Reps to share their Departmental NSS recommendations and plans for the year ahead



Academic Affairs

- I have been participating in the College's "Operational Excellence" initiative, focusing specifically on timetabling (both academic and examinations) and the availability and quality of teaching and examination spaces
 - In relation to academic timetabling, I have been making the case that the College move towards a standardized means of publishing timetables to students. Currently, there are 15 different ways by which Departments publish timetables – including word-of-mouth and manually composed documents. I am pushing for a CELCAT-based method which sees timetables inserted into Outlook calendars via 'AUTOCALEX', with students notified of updates by email. This has been positively received and I will follow-up on this over the next few months
 - In relation to examination timetabling, I have questioned four main aspects: 1) whether it's conducive to learning for some students in the College to have an extraordinary number of exams, 2) whether it's appropriate for many students to have all modules examined at the end of the year, 3) whether there should be clearer guidance on the number of exams a student can sit in a day, and 4) whether there should be guidance on the maximum allowed duration of exams. The idea of new policy regarding exam timing

- later became one of two focus points in the meeting and I look to continue pushing for policy and conversations on the matter
- The quality and availability of examination spaces were also discussed. I emphasized that certain “quick fixes” should be explored ASAP, in particular for College Conferencing & Events to scrap fees for setting up AV equipment in the Great Hall so that a large and visible timer can be projected onto the stage, and for College to build a repository of quality equipment e.g. desks that can be used in an exam venue. These suggestions were taken on-board to be explored in greater depth
 - We have drafted the principal theme of the NSS Response and the core recommendations. The proposed theme has to do with students being over-assessed, overworked, and not necessarily being challenged to grow/stimulated to be interested in their subject sufficiently. We hope to have a draft ready for Rep input through a workshop in mid-November, and publication in late-November.
 - In line with the Response, I have begun work on understanding quality feedback and what students might expect from it. I hope to integrate, as part of our NSS Response, some recommendations to suggest what the least students can expect from their coursework and exam feedback, in-line with one of my manifesto points
 - Looking ahead, I have also started going about ‘setting the scene’ to help make sure our recommendations are translated into action. I have discussed the theme with Sue Gibson, the Acting Vice-Provost (Education), alongside some staff in Faculties and from Registry. I will soon be joining a College working party responsible for proposing and introducing regulations and policies surrounding assessment and feedback, of which I am currently inputting into what the working party should look into - including access to exam scripts, levels of assessment experienced by students, timeliness of feedback return, amongst others
 - The parameters to our PRES Response has been mapped; I will be organizing workshops/focus groups in the coming weeks to get feedback on our draft recommendations and to get additional recommendations, and also use the Response as a way to energize and engage our PGR Reps

Learning Environment

- I have received additional feedback relating to the Wolfson Restaurant at Hammersmith Hospital campus and am working with Alex McKee to reflect the feedback to Catering

Personal & Professional Development

- I have discussed with the Graduate School about altering the times for Master Classes at Silwood Park to better accommodate the schedules of both PGT and PGR students. The Graduate School explored this but found it unworkable, as their trainers lived far away from Silwood Park and scheduling the Master Classes at a later time in the day would have significantly affected the trainers’ private lives. Instead, they have come up with two very interesting solutions:
 - They will invest in having interactive webinars for the most popular and/or important courses. They will shortly be piloting the technology, and I look forward to seeing what the outcomes will be. I have suggested that they ensure appropriate equipment and technicians are made available at Silwood so to minimize the risk of technical issues during the sessions, and the Graduate School has indicated they will follow-up on this
 - They will look into having trainers stay overnight at Silwood Park at select points in the year, where they will then deliver Professional Skills Development courses at suitable times for both PGT and PGR students
- I have been supporting the development of the Imperial Award pilot, of which we already have 34 students registered