

Imperial College Union Board of Trustees Report

Nick Burstow, Deputy President (Education)

Please find below an overview of the goals I set at the August residential, and my current progress towards them:

Goals:

Year 1 Undergraduate Coursework Feedback Audit

- Last academic year saw the introduction of College Policy¹ aiming to standardise students' experience with assessment feedback across the College
- This Policy stipulates best practice for feedback return to be 10 working days, although some flexibility is permitted for different types of assessment (exams vs. coursework)¹
- This academic year (AY 17-18) is the first year where such Policy is in place
- While departments are encouraged to monitor the timeliness of their feedback, there is no central, College-wide record of assessment timeliness, and so no easy way of determining whether the Policy is being adhered to across College
- One of my goals for the year is to run an audit of all Year 1 Undergraduate assessment feedback. This will result in the first ever College-wide repository of assessment timeliness, giving an insight into which departments are adhering to Policy and which ones are not.
- I will compile a centralised database (Excel document) with a list of all Year 1 Undergraduate assessment titles, dates set, and expected dates for feedback return. The Year 1 Academic Representatives within our *Academic Representation Network* will record the dates when they actually received their feedback, alongside any additional comments (for example: "*Feedback was late because marker was unwell. This was communicated with us and we have no problems.*")
- This has been well received by College staff, in both departments and at a senior, faculty level. I am now awaiting assessment dates from all departments.

Student Shapers (working title)

- UCL run a scheme called ChangeMakers² which enables students and staff to work together to make changes to education to enhance the learning experience of students
- Students and staff pitch to UCL for funding to facilitate the changes they would like to make to education. This approach utilises a 'students as partners' method of improving education, an approach championed by Imperial.
- The College has outlined a desire to adopt a similar scheme in its recent *Learning and Teaching Strategy*³
- The College plans to work alongside the Union in its pursuit of the above
- The Union has been in touch with UCL to arrange a visit to see the ChangeMakers scheme first-hand. We are scheduled to visit on Friday November 10th.

¹ <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/academic-feedback/Academic-feedback-policy-for-taught-programmes.pdf>

² <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/changemakers>

³ <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/about/leadership-and-strategy/vp-education/public/LearningTeachingStrategy.pdf>

Postgraduate Timetabling

- Work has been done by previous DPEs to ensure that taught postgraduates are given protected Wednesday afternoons, just like their undergraduate counterparts
- Despite this, the number of taught postgraduates with Wednesday afternoons free is c. 30%
- My plan this year is to work alongside Luke, the GSU President, to collect more data from students to demonstrate the importance of this issue and desire for change
- I have spoken with Chris Banks, Assistant Provost (Space), who is supportive of this endeavour and keen to collaborate so that we can tie this matter with the wider topic of College space utilisation
- Luke has been busy finishing his dissertation and more recently embarking on his PhD, so work on this matter is currently on hold. We will meet to discuss plans for this by the end of October.

Mitigating Circumstances

- There is currently variation across the College in the way that the mitigating circumstances application process is communicated to students
- Often these instructions are buried in text-heavy documents that are hard to decipher
- One of my goals is to simplify and standardise the way these processes are communicated, using infographics/flow-charts
- When meeting the Directors of Undergraduate Studies to discuss the feedback audit, I also mentioned this item. They have given me the contact details of the relevant staff members, who will hold the departmental specific mitigating circumstances application process.
- In order to take this item further I plan on working with the Deputy President (Welfare), as Fintan has a closer relationship with the Senior Tutors than I. Also, as this item is one affecting students' education and wellbeing, it would be beneficial to involve us both.
- We will also need to speak with Marketing & Comms, as they will be the ones creating the infographics. Given the current situation (staff changes and Freshers') I have held off from discussing any formal plans as of yet, but will do so once things settle down.

Responses

The operational tasks of note that I have completed over the summer period are listed below:

NSS Response

- Every year the Union writes a response to the College based on students' answers to the National Student Survey (NSS), an annual survey completed by all recently graduated students
- This year our response was completed in the fastest time it ever has been, and has already been discussed at a number of high-level College committees:
 - o *Faculty Teaching Committee (Engineering)*
 - o *Learning & Teaching Committee*
 - o *Senate*
 - o *Provost's Board*
 - o *Council*
- Provost's Board accepted a number of the recommendations that they feel are implementable within the next academic year, and are keen to work with the Union in delivering the others
- Chippy and I will be meeting with Prof. Simone Buitendijk, Vice Provost (Education), on October 25th to discuss each recommendation in depth in order to put together an action plan going forwards
- I enclose a copy of the "2017 NSS Response Cheat Sheet", which summarises the important figures and recommendations we have put forwards
- Our full response is available online⁴

PRES Response

- The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) is a biennial survey completed by postgraduate research students
- As with the NSS, our response this year was completed in record time, months before previous iterations have been produced
- The PRES will be discussed at a number of high-level College committees:
 - o *Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC)*
 - o *Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)*
- As our response is yet to be discussed I cannot comment on the College's response to our recommendations, but I will keep you updated
- I enclose a copy of the "2017 PRES Response Cheat Sheet", which summarises the important figures and recommendations we have put forwards
- Our full response is available online⁵

I am happy to answer any specific questions on my report and work on anything you think is missing, just let me know, Nick.

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⁴<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/sites/default/files/responses/pdfs/ICU%20NSS%20Response%202017.pdf>

⁵<https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/sites/default/files/responses/pdfs/ICU%20PRES%20Response%202017%20FINAL.pdf>