

Imperial College Union Council Report

Nick Burstow, Deputy President (Education)

Please see Chippy's report for an explanation of our new report style. We welcome any feedback you may have.

Please find below my report for Union Council:

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."*)
- I spent August and September meeting with departmental Directors of Undergraduate Studies to speak about the audit
- Since the start of term (when the list of assessments was finalised) I have been emailing departments asking for this information to be added to the central database
- At the time of writing this report I have emailed all departments and received assessment details from just under half

Student Shapers (working title)

- UCL run a scheme called ChangeMakers²
- ChangeMakers started in 2014/15 and enables students and staff to work together to make changes to education to enhance the learning experience of students

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>

- 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. At the time of writing this report we are awaiting their reply, but hope to have visited by the end of October.

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
- 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.

Operations:

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), 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, which is yet to be made available online

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

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

Learning & Teaching Strategy

- The *Learning & Teaching Strategy*⁴ sets out the College's vision for the future of education at Imperial
- Despite being such an important document, at 42 pages it is difficult for a 'typical student/staff member' to read through and digest
- I spent time at the start of my tenure condensing this strategy to a concise, easy-to-read and digestible document, cutting it from 42 to 4 pages
- After approval from the College the document will be distributed to our Departmental Academic Reps
- Please let me know if you would like a copy of the condensed *Learning & Teaching Strategy*

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