



Imperial College Union Communications Committee

AGENDA ITEM NO.	7
TITLE	Welcome Communications Evaluation
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	The Welcome communications campaign for new Imperial students occurred between August and October 2018 with a focus on awareness and building early positive associations. The campaign was revised and had key successes across key metrics along with relevant challenges and recommendations.
PURPOSE	For the Committee to note the conduct and results of the effort to engage new students.
DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED	To note and discuss

INTRODUCTION

The Welcome 2018 campaign ran from A-level Results Day on 16 August to the end of Welcome Week on 8 October. It targeted the following segments of students who are identified in College Registry as Year 1s:

- 1390 Postgraduate Research
- 4747 Postgraduate Taught
- 2969 Undergraduates

Our objectives were two fold, with different strands of activities underpinning each. The main aim was **awareness**, with a closely aligned secondary goal of **building positive associations** among students. As such, the following activities were conducted:

MAIN COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Welcome Hub

The Welcome Hub was launched on Results Day as a single webpage providing an introduction to the Union, along with Welcome specific activities. It was self-contained with no external links to the broader website, as a deliberate strategy to control the hierarchy of information that students receive at the outset. Linked from the main page of College's own Welcome hub, it was promoted via the Union's social media channels using College hashtags so it would benefit from the traffic of new students naturally accessing information about College. The Hub contained a link to a specific shop pack for new students,

Handbook

The annual handbook was revised to make it more succinct and user-friendly with calls to action for each activity for which we encourage Union engagement, and a pull-out Welcome calendar in the centre. New information included a clear definition of the Union, as well as an infographic explaining how the Union works. Unlike previous years, there was only one handbook for both Undergraduates and Postgraduates as it was felt that the information tended to be the same in both publications.

Social media and Emails:

Social media engagement continued throughout September through general Union channels, but mostly through a specific Undergraduate Fresher's Facebook page co-managed by College, as well as a Postgraduate page co-managed by the graduate Students' Union.

Stalls

Union stalls were rolled out over the course of Welcome with specific events for different segments including International students, commuting students, PGTs and PGRs. There was specific collateral for each segment with information tailored to those groups, as well as general fun activities aimed at building positive brand associations such as free pizza giveaways, and game days. We also did outreach in Hammersmith.

Fair

The annual fair was the marquee event of Welcome and was expanded to showcase the entire Union offer with OTs and other service areas on display with a clear narrative that mirrored the handbook and Welcome Hub. We also engaged over sixty external partners with activations and other offers to our students.

OT Talks

OTs gave talks to different groups of students at Fair, discussing representation, wellbeing issues, and the Union.

CHALLENGES

Resources

With Welcome being a key period for the Communications team responsible for delivering a large part of Welcome and the communications campaign in particular, the team was not adequately staffed and suffered capacity issues and output as a result.

- **Lost opportunities:** This affected the number of stalls we were able to deliver with planned activities for Halls Move-In Day being culled. This was not ideal since most Undergraduate first years reside in halls of residence and would likely have benefitted from more expansive engagement.
- **General marketing support:** Whilst there was a focus on the big picture objectives and activities, support across the board was not consistent with areas like the shop, Advice and Governance not benefitting from bigger campaigns initially planned and which would have been possible with more resources.
- **Union video:** There was no capacity to do a general Union video planned. Resources were diverted to doing a GSU video as it was felt this would benefit the larger effort to reach PGs.
- **Student Evaluation:** Whilst we have data for measuring reach of Welcome activities, we have not received qualitative feedback on students' experiences of Welcome and associated activities.

Handbook cover and distribution

Whilst handbook content was improved, the cover should have been changed to appeal to the more mature Postgraduate segment. Also, while distribution to PGs improved because of aggressive ground engagement during Welcome, there still was no clear distribution plan worked out between College and the Union to ensure every single student had a copy, unlike the UGs who were all guaranteed to receive a handbook.

Fair name

Recognition that the term *freshers'* was no longer in keeping with sector trends, was fast being perceived as pejorative, and was not appealing to half of new students (i.e PGs) led to vigorous discussions and subsequent consensus around changing the name of the main event during Welcome. However, there was caution among OTs and other sabbs about rushing the change and the decision was made to stick with Freshers' Fair for another year and to begin consultations early on a change for next year.

Union website:

The Union's website is poorly structured, untidy, and difficult to navigate which means visits to landing pages for more information about the Union offers being presented through Welcome collateral undermined the message. The need to address the Union website is critical to realising engagement goals.

College partnership

There was partnership with College on many aspects of the Welcome campaign which worked quite well in some areas particularly those with pre-existing relationships, such as the digital team at College or the Operational Excellence team with whom we were able to collaborate on a pilot evaluation programme. However, the general coordination suffered from lack of resources and a central resource for all information across the imperial community.

METRICS

Welcome Hub:

- 600 views - Results Day
- 6600 views, 5, 092 unique views – entire Welcome period

Overall web traffic

- 12 percent increase over 17/18 Welcome period

Social media:

- Twitter -74,000 organic impressions on Results Day
- Instagram - Around 3800 Instagram Stories view on Results Day

New student email:

- Delivered to 8,879 new students
- Opened 14, 244 times
- 2314 total clicks

Shop Welcome Bundle

- 279 sold online and instore

Welcome events:

- Sold out by first day of Welcome Week

Liberation Groups sign-up:

- 89

Welcome income from fair and other activities

- increase of £4, 616

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Write the plan for Welcome earlier so necessary consultations and foundations can be laid for possible changes
- Change the name of fair and initiate discussions early with all stakeholders across Union and College
- Offer to take over planning responsibility for certain College Welcome activities for which we are more suited and which are in keeping with key engagement objectives, such as PGT events
- Have a more structured approach to collaboration with the Graduate School