

Microsoft Teams Pilot Evaluation

Background

- Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) is a digital platform available to all Imperial students and staff as part of the Office 365 package. It is designed to enhance collaboration, communication and sharing of information and has many additional functionalities such as project planning and management, video calls, data analysis and embedded websites.
- MS Teams is somewhat of an enhanced version of the program Slack, which was unsuccessfully trialled by the Academic Representation Network a few years ago.
- MS Teams has been successfully implemented across the student body in Materials and it is likely that other departments will shortly follow suit.
- After successfully using the program to collaborate with the Officer Trustees, the DPE (2018/19) recognised the potential benefits and enhancements that MS Teams could bring to the ARN and decided to bring this to ERB.
- DPE (2018/19) presented MS Teams to Education and Representation Board on 6/12/18 and ERB agreed to run a few pilots (Horizons, UG and PG Faculty Reps and Medicine Reps) to see how it would be received by these rep teams. Ultimately, the pilots would inform ERBs decision on whether to commit to embedding MS Teams as a tool to enhance the ARN.

Observations of Pilot

- The Faculty Reps Team has been utilised quite effectively by the PG reps (AWOs and DPR). The Medicine Teams and the Horizons Teams have seen little use.
- The pilot Teams were launched very late in the first term when reps were primarily occupied with degree related work and the use of other platforms such as email, Whatsapp and Facebook had already been established.
- The only functions of MS Teams that have been used so far are the channel communication and chat functions. File sharing, Planner, Calendar, embedded websites etc. haven't been used.
- Due to the loss of the two E&W coordinators at the end of Autumn Term, DPE and the E&W team didn't have the capacity to drive usage of MS Teams.
- Since the launch of the rep pilots, MS Teams has been implemented across the Union for staff use by our internal Systems team, which has showcased significant functionality that has not been utilised as part of the rep MS Team pilots.

Recommendation

- MS Teams has the potential to revolutionise the way the ARN functions. If implemented properly it would enhance collaboration, communication and sharing of ideas and best practice - ultimately significantly increasing the impact of the ARN. If implemented incorrectly it would fail like Slack did a few years ago.
- The adoption of MS Teams across the ARN is contingent on having an effective architecture set up, embedding MS Teams into rep induction training and having an E&W team with the capacity, commitment and understanding of how to utilise MS Teams effectively in place of other platforms (email, Whatsapp etc.).

Recommendation: Delay the full launch of MS Teams across the ARN until AY 19/20 so that all the elements are in place to launch it successfully.