

Imperial College Union Council Report

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[Complete] Goal 1 - Produce NSS and PTES Responses in record time and use them to drive for change

You can find the responses on the Union website at <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/your-representatives/responses>

- **Responses.** The E&W team and I worked hard to produce these responses earlier than ever and with the highest level of analysis to date. We equipped all the reps across the Academic Rep Network with the responses and the recommended actions contained in them with the idea that they could take them back to their departments and use them to lobby for action.
- **Driving for Change.** In response Simone Buitendijk, Imperial's Vice-Provost (Education), called together the first NSS/PTES Working Group where Becky and I pushed for action. The action plan produced by this group, department Annual Monitoring Reports and PTES action plans encompass 9/14 PTES response recommended actions and 12/19 NSS response recommended actions in one form or another. The Student Experience conversations (elaborated on in the College section below) were triggered by the early conversations around the NSS/PTES responses.

[Partially Complete] Goal 2 - Conduct a Review of the UG and PG Academic Representation Network

Map the entire network to improve training, support and communication.

- **Rep Training.** At the beginning of the year I re-wrote the academic rep induction training to be more streamlined and useful to reps. We trained the highest number of reps ever across both the UG and PG network and received an average evaluation of 8.5/10.
- **MS Teams.** Together with ERB, I ran Microsoft Teams pilots with some rep teams during the year. These weren't hugely successful, but we were able to pinpoint exactly why and learn from the pilots and ERB has decided to go ahead with a network-wide Teams launch.
- **Review.** Progress on the review project was slow as we had no coordinator support since December. However, we put scoping the project and identified some quick wins for 2019/20 and a longer term action plan with changes to implement in 2020/21. We will pick up the foundational work of mapping the network when the new coordinators start.

[Complete] Goal 3 - Spearhead student involvement in student-facing projects such as StudentShapers, Imperial Award and I-Explore

- **Student Shapers.** I worked very closely at the beginning of the year with the StudentShapers team to design and launch the scheme. I have been on the project selection panel throughout the year and have identified where many project proposals wouldn't lead to authentic student-staff partnership. The scheme now has dozens of high-quality projects running which provide paid opportunities for students and is looking at how it can spread the partnership model to other aspects of life at Imperial.
- **I-Explore.** As part of the I-Explore Module Innovation Group, I have played a key role this year in shaping what the exciting I-Explore scheme will look like when it starts in 2021. This included prompting the introduction of the Multidisciplinary projects stream, pushing them

to embed opportunities for societal engagement and getting all I-Explore modules to be 5 ECTS rather than a mix of 5 and 7.5, which would have been unfair on some students.

- **Imperial Award.** I conducted a piece of consultation for the Imperial Award that asked over 250 PGT students how the scheme can be tailored to meet their needs. The report was gratefully received by the steering group and nearly all the recommendations in the report have been actioned.
- **PGT Engagement.** I wrote a document outlining how PGT students should be engaged in the PGT Curriculum Review based on the document written by Nick last year, feedback at ERB and lessons learnt from the UG CR. This document was shared with all PGT reps for edit and comments and was endorsed at Learning & Teaching Committee. Hopefully this document will help push for better student engagement in the PG Curriculum Review.

[Complete] Goal 4 - Fight for improved feedback for students across Imperial

- **Curriculum Review.** This year was marked by the Curriculum Review which involved thousands of College staff hours and hundreds of my hours reviewing, providing feedback and approving new programmes. As part of the Curriculum Review, most departments have done a good job of decreasing assessment burden (quantity and frequency) to give students more 'breathing space' in their curriculum to digest content and reflect and improve based on feedback.
- **Feedback Timeliness.** Most departments have explicitly committed to adhering to the College's feedback policy (2-week turnaround) or have explicitly stated where they won't (typically larger assessments) and that students will be clearly informed of when they can expect their feedback. I challenged the departments who didn't explicitly commit to the College's feedback policy.
- **Continuous Feedback.** The pedagogy transformation projects which will be happening over the next couple of years, along with the input from the many recently hired teaching fellows across College, will lead to more flipped-classroom style teaching which will embed continuous feedback into the learning experience. I have endorsed these projects where possible.
- There is always more work to be done in this area, but following work by previous DPE's, College have this area quite high on their agenda. Well done to all students who have been involved in the Curriculum Review and who have been fighting for improved feedback in your departments.

[Partially Complete] Goal 5 - Achieve over 2000 nominations in this year's Student Academic Choice Awards

- While we didn't reach the 2000 nomination goal, I am very proud of this year's SACAs and especially Fran who worked so hard to deliver it. Introducing new categories, a new ceremony location and the shortest ever nomination period all with a short-staffed team made delivering the SACAs difficult, but we made it to 1566 nominations in the end. We received loads of positive feedback from staff saying that being nominated for a SACAs meant the world to them - evidence of positive culture change, the impact of the SACAs. Thank you to those of you who were involved.

Reflections on a year working at the Union

Working at the Union has been filled with ups and downs and has been immensely educational. I have particularly enjoyed working with student reps and the other Sabbs as well as the key staff who make it all happen. A lot of what I do at the Union is business as usual, but below are some key areas to highlight.

- **Trustee.** Working with the other Trustees at Board and Sub-Committees has been one of the highlights of this year. We've had some tough conversations and had to make tough calls but overall I'm happy with the legacy that the other OTs and I have left.
- **Recruitment.** By the end of this year I will have been on the recruitment panel for around 10 roles at the Union (and a few at College). This has been a very enlightening experience.
- **Change Management.** I embedded change management methodology into the Union's Work Efficiency Project, helping us to think about how we will embed the tools we're creating and think about the risks involved.
- **Leadership.** A major area that we've all focused on, especially in the later part of this year, has been working with our senior management team at Leadership. This has been by far the most challenging aspect of my role this year, and there is a lot of work left to do to get this team to where it needs to be. My role at Leadership has been to provide structure to our approach, suggesting principles and tools such as prioritisation matrices where appropriate to help guide our decision making. We've put in a lot of work into prioritising our activities at Leadership and I, along with the OTs, have always pushed for Student Representation to be at the core of our decisions.

Reflections on a year working at the College

Working at the College this year has been incredible - there, I've felt like myself and the other OTs have been well respected, taken seriously and given a platform to actually embed change. The work I've done at College is difficult to quantify but below are a few areas to highlight.

- **Curriculum Review.** A lot of my time in the first half of the year was dedicated to getting departments to engage students in their Curriculum Reviews and reviewing and approving reviewed programmes. The future of education at Imperial is looking very exciting and I am glad that I got to shape part of it.
- **Academic Regulations.** Becky, Rob and I have been heavily involved with the Regulations & Policy Review Group which has been shaping the new single set of Academic Regulations (the rules that govern things like mitigating circumstances, progression and failure, module sizes and year weightings) and have fought for the best for students throughout the process. We successfully pushed for student-centred elements such as the retention of a borderline degree classification zone of 1.5%, with a systematic method of assessment to ensure that students receive the degree they deserve with minimal bias as well as the introduction of fair exit degrees for all courses so that students who need or want to leave are fairly compensated for the work they put in up until that point.
- **Learning & Teaching Strategy Review.** I was invited to provide a review of the Learning & Teaching Strategy where I included recommendations around improving parity in quality of student experience, focussing on engaging Postgraduate Taught students and considering the holistic student experience, not just that in the classroom.
- **Teaching Spaces.** Some student reps and I have been quite heavily involved in designing future teaching spaces at Imperial, such as the incoming new lecture theatres. We've also

pushed for more social space for students which, together with the work that James has been doing, will lead to more social space for students in the future.

- **Presenting at Education Day 2019.** Throughout the year I was invited to be on panels at external conferences such as the Westminster Higher Education Forum and UK Council for International Student Affairs, but the highlight for me was speaking about Student Identities as Learners at Imperial's Education Day 2019. I received immensely encouraging positive feedback on my talk and it has sparked follow up conversations with staff across College on how to help students transition from Further Education to Higher Education.
- **Student Experience.** All the work I've done at College including what's mentioned above, has led to me being at the centre of conversations at a senior level around the holistic student experience. I've used this position to push for a culture change based on principles such as parity of experience, embedded inclusivity and students as partners. I am aiming to get a commitment to as much of this as possible in writing, through groups such as the SAT Vision group, NSS/PTES Working Group and through documents such as the up and coming Academic Strategy. Getting commitment to students in writing from College will help these ideas outlive my influence.

It's been a fantastic year - I've learned so much and have been able to see the impact of what I've done on both the College and the Union. Working with the other Sabbs has been the highlight of the year for me - they are fantastic people and will go on to do amazing things.

As always, I am available in person and via email for any questions you may have on my report or the Union's work.

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