



# Imperial College Union Council Report

November 2020

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# Foreword



*My biggest priority for the year is around communication. I believe that as an SU, we need to be reaching out to all our members. We have a few core groups of students who engage and feel engaged. And we need to continue that. But we also have a medical school that's grown a lot more diverse, particularly in recent years, with large proportions that too often don't feel like they're represented. That's by no fault of the students, but by us - they have ideas and viewpoints and we need to encourage them to come forwards.*

*There is no easy fix. But to start with, we want to empower their voices.*

*Transparency.*

*Accountability.*

*Representation.*

*These are our 3 commitments we want to weave into everything we do. With every meeting and every change, we ask ourselves how can we communicate this back to our students. How can we hold ourselves to the mark. Are we doing everything we can to represent the views and gauge the concerns of our wider student body. With every idea that comes our way, how can we harness the passion of our students and push to bring it to fruition to bring about a real positive impact.*

*These are not ambitious new innovations, but the foundations that makes up a strong Students' Union. There's so much our SU does behind-the-scenes every single day. Innumerable representing, advising and advocating, ultimately striving towards a common goal - *making the student experience as good as it can be*. But this shouldn't stay behind-the-scenes. We want our students to recognise that this is the place where their voice really can make a difference.*

Stream Updates: August-Freshers



## ICSMSU 2020-21

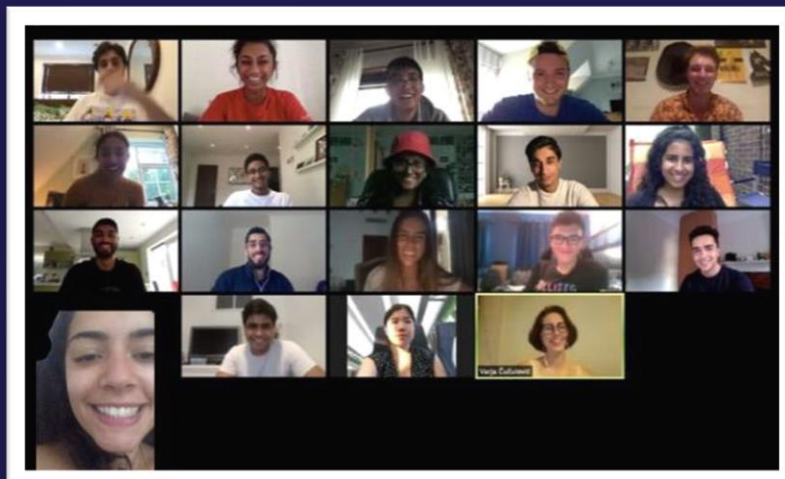
*We're just getting started...*



### ICSMSU Update Report

#### Overview

This year we have our largest ever SU committee, with a total of 21 members made up of one sabbatical officer and 20 student volunteers who have all bonded well. To ensure we encompass all elements that make up the student experience, we are continuing the structure of the last 2 years in which a large proportion of specific role-related work is overseen in multiple smaller sub-teams. The newer roles introduced in the 2018 academic year are continuing to become more defined, with each of them gaining responsibilities which are relevant to their roles. We are working on the feedback from last year to make these positions the most efficient and relevant they can be and releasing their full potential, which in turn will have positive trickle-down effects for the SU as a whole. In particular, this year sees the return of the Sites & Services officer and we have already begun defining the remit of this role and ensuring we learn the lessons of previous years, as discussed later.



Perhaps fittingly, this year also sees our largest ever cohort of our new students, with ~400 for the MBBS course and over 170 for BMB - both record highs.

We've faced a lot of challenges as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that has swept the globe, however our resilience to provide the very best student experience has stimulated us to streamline our approaches across all domains - including pushing for clearly signposted guidance to students, particularly those on clinical placements, adapting our events and shifting to a majority digital offering, finding ways to support our over 65 clubs and societies in running online and COVID-safe activities, and introducing new welfare campaigns and fundraising initiatives to help combat the many personal challenges the lockdown has brought out.

Even without COVID, this would have been a significantly challenging year with the aftermath of the Sale of the St Mary's medical school building and commencement of the student consultation focus groups, along with the continued rollout of the new MBBS curriculum. We have been shaping its development and implementation, on-hand to respond to issues as they arise, and we've been a lot more involved in the introductory two weeks than we have ever been before.

Overall, despite incredibly tough circumstances, this year's SU has already pushed through against all odds to accomplish more than ever before, worked incredibly hard on a number of our priorities, and already began to leave a deep-rooted legacy for many years to come.

### Executive Team

Our Executive team is designed to ensure the smooth running of the SU's internal operations. It is made up of our Deputy President, BMB Society President, Executive Treasurer, Secretary & Communications officer, and Sites & Services officer.

Our **Deputy President** has done a phenomenal job of training our SU for the year ahead. We revamped our entire training programme which was more comprehensive than ever before, and introduced **compulsory Welfare and Active Bystander training** for every member of our committee. We believe whilst a lot of the remit of Welfare cases falls under the role of our dedicated Welfare chair and full-time President, welfare issues can arise and be passed on to any individual within the SU and so it is everyone's responsibility to ensure we're well-equipped and ready to ensure our



members are in the right direction and signposted to the support they need when required. These sessions received very positive feedback and we would recommend Students' Unions and constituent unions across the board seek to implement something of a similar nature. We also started off the year with stream meetings to plan a vision for the year ahead and define our top priorities, followed more recently by 1-to-1 meetings with every member of our committee to discuss any problems and concerns they may have and how we can best assist them throughout the year, something we hope to continue on a semi-regular basis in addition to ad hoc check ins. Our aim is to continue to weave a harmonious, inclusive, and most of all, fun culture within our committee for the entire year. At the end of the day, we want everyone on ICSMSU to really enjoy their time and undertake personal development in areas that are most meaningful to them. That is the measure by which we want to define our success. Primarily, we don't seek to just build events and campaigns, it is people that make a team and so we want to build up individuals; we recognise they are the ones with the ideas, passion, and in many cases, experience within their areas so our aim is to inspire their creativity, empower them to make change, and seek to facilitate the ideas that are most meaningful to them.

Our **Secretary & Communications officer** has also very much had their work cut out over the Summer. As mentioned, Communication is one of the main focuses we want to get right this year. We've overhauled our communications strategy and created a more cohesive brand identity which is consistent across our entire range of media. Firstly, the primary source of communication for us is our weekly newsletter. Feedback we collected stated it has previously been too cluttered, not logically ordered and was difficult to utilise for our own SU as a primary means for publicity. Our newsletter has since been redesigned into logical sections - focus on the work our SU is doing, a dedicated space for SU-run events, announcements, campaigns and other initiatives, and a space for Clubs and Societies to publicise their events, in addition to external opportunities which are hosted on our website. Part of this work has included new protocols to allow our Clubs and Societies, and members of our SU committee, to easily submit content so it can be collated together in a more streamlined way. Our second big overhaul comes to our website. Our old website was often described as unintuitive, grossly outdated and in need of an entire overhaul. As the main manifesto pledge of our Secretary & Communications officer, our new website has been built up entirely from a blank canvas. We've spent long stretches of well over 21 and a half hours of Teams calls

together hand-crafting a new website from scratch with updated content and design. Redundant information has been removed, and we're now focusing on getting across information that our students need and this will be worked on an ongoing basis throughout the year. We want our website to be dynamic and updated with relevant information throughout the year. In addition to our website and newsletter, we have also updated our templates for minutes, email signatures, PowerPoint presentations, even this very report, and much more to be in line and cohesive with our new visual identity.

As far as transparency goes, we've also started to publish our SU meeting minutes and provide a centralised page for minutes from across the board including SSLGs. We've also hosted multiple Q&As on our social media and have tried to be more prominent in our digital presence to encourage students to step forwards with any questions, concerns and complaints - a very poignant aim in the current climate with an otherwise limited physical presence that we have benefitted from in previous years.

The reintroduction of the **Sites & Services officer** into our exec is an extremely timely role, and we want to avoid mistakes of the past by building this role up sustainably by empowering our Sites & Services officer to take a lead on all aspects relating to merchandise, facilities and utility of our communal space across campuses, and input as a member of the Faculty of Medicine's health & safety committee to which we have added the role to the membership. Already we have a new range of ICSMSU merchandise, with new items including face masks, fleeces, varsity jackets, copper engraved water bottles and more (purchase now at <http://shop.icsmsu.com/>)! This has been the first update in over 5 years and has been very well-received by our new freshers, older years, and even alumni! We've also undertaken a stock count and are planning grand office clear-outs on a wide scale as well as maintenance of our display cabinets in Reynolds in the future.

Our **Executive Treasurer** is one of 2 finance-focused roles on our committee. This year we are going to face extraordinarily difficult financial circumstances firstly due to the currently forecasted 25% cut in grant from Imperial College Union, which we are of the belief should not be applied towards CUs in the same way as it is to be applied to CSPs, and secondly due to the lack of Self-Generated Income that would usually keep our finances afloat. To mitigate this as best as possible, together we have worked hard to revamp our sponsorship approach with the development of a

professional-looking sponsorship brochure with dedicated packages, targeted contacts database and individualised approach to negotiation. This has led to what is certainly a record-level of sponsorship in recent years if not ever, both in terms of numbers of sponsors attracted and monetary value. Whilst this, along with the introduction of a new financial model negotiated over the last 2 years, will go a long way to ensure we can mitigate against the effects of the COVID situation and generally provide the best value to students in future, there is still a long way to go before we can be far less reliant on SGI. This is and has been a big problem in the sustainability of ICSMSU and often a financial stent to the involvement of students, especially those of a widening participation background.

Finally, the **BMB Society president** and **Academic Officer** are also embedded onto our Executive to ensure we are inclusive and actively advocating for our BMB students who have a unique course. The BMB society continues to run with a new committee and has focused on building up their identity with our BMB cohort through an increased social media presence, Welcome Talks, and social activities including an Among Us night and an upcoming Quiz Night. They have many ideas and a lot of enthusiasm and I look forward to working with them and reporting on further developments throughout the year. Academic advancements are discussed in the next section.

## Exec Team



- ✓ Overhauled ICSMSU Website.
- ✓ Revamped visual identity, cohesive across our redesigned newsletter, website, minutes and presentations.
- ✓ Publication of SU meeting minutes.
- ✓ Closer Inter-CU relations and our first Inter-CU Committee Quiz Night.
- ✓ New ICSMSU Merchandise range.
- ✓ Vastly increased sponsorships through a professional brochure and packages, and expanding our offerings to partner organisations.

## Academics

Despite the pandemic, most of our teaching has remained in-person due to the interactive hands-on nature of ICSM courses. Our clinical years were back out on the wards as normal in July, and we welcomed our record-number of new year 1 students, over 400 for MBBS and 150 for BMB, in-person. All yeargroups within ICSM have some level of in-person interaction on offer.

Whilst there were teething problems with the early online lectures in June/July and signposting of the digital learning packages, these have mostly been addressed. Additional concerns have also been around a lack of clear guidance for COVID-19 isolation. This has been raised both by myself at our Faculty of Medicine COBRA meetings which take place before working hours every other morning, as well as to direct members of staff where relevant, and the Faculty have been incredibly receptive and quick to update this and ensure the information is well-signposted.

With the roll-out of a new curriculum for Phase 1b (2<sup>nd</sup> year MBBS), much of the work conducted has been engaging with the ICSM Faculty to assist in the curriculum review process and ensure clarity on how the course will look, as well as advocating for this to be shared with our academic societies who are a key member of academic support. On the note of academic societies, our BMB Society are laying the groundwork to run a new tutorial series for BMB students. We have also updated our ICSMSU Notebank for Phase 1a (1<sup>st</sup> year MBBS) and Year 1 BMB students, as well providing ongoing updates with guidance documents for that of the Year 4 MBBS. We've also fed back on the new academic tutoring system that has been implemented within ICSM and have worked to support the faculty in offering better study skills support to 3<sup>rd</sup> year students to help them through the difficult change to active learning on the wards.

The NSS data for this year was also released and our academic officers were on hand to draft up a full ICSMSU response to the points raised for both MBBS and BMB and discussions around the implementations of our suggestions are ongoing.

One such area is the student voice. In response to many years of loud student concerns, we requested the faculty to work with us on the implementation of a centralised, holistic feedback system '[Unitu](#)' for raising up of day-to-day concerns. Dishearteningly, this has faced much resistance from the faculty due to concerns this may take away from the existing 'SOLE platform', although SOLE is in place for general, overarching

thematic feedback sent in hindsight and has previously faced scrutiny and dissatisfaction from both students and staff in recent years coupled with poor response rates and engagement. We are determined to seek a way to implement a feedback system to *complement* SOLE that empowers the student voice and what they care most about, however small or superfluous it may appear from an outsider's perspective, and whilst we believe there is a place for SOLE within ICSM, the current lack of a centralised mechanism to raise issues as they happen, particularly for those on placements and whilst at remote sites, means our students feel the current system is failing us. We are now evaluating our options to implement this system on a trialled basis as a purely Union-run initiative instead.

Another big focus has been on trying to remotely integrate our new External intercalating students for BSc (Year 4 MBBS). As the only MBBS yeargroup without significant in-person interactions, this would certainly be a difficult task. We collaborated with the Faculty to introduce an all-new external intercalators' buddy scheme in which external students are paired up with internal students, and we also ran a virtual external intercalators mingle and Q&A session with members of the SU and a previous external intercalating student.


As usual, early year rep elections took place for years 3, 5 and 6 Medicine and they have been ably assisted by Conor, our Academic officer for Clinical Years. They have been proactively relaying feedback to the faculty and advising on many course changes. We have already held our very first Student-Staff Liaison group (SSLG) meeting for our clinical years which was very productive and overall set a good tone for the rest of the year. For the first time ever, SSLG meeting minutes will be published for all members of ICSM so they can read through the discussions that have taken place, and hopefully somewhat begin to close the feedback loop by allowing our students to see the actions that have resulted from their feedback.

Discussions are now also beginning on our centralised, society-run mock examinations which are a humungous undertaking in which we book out an entire hospital Outpatients department across 4 weekends to offer free of charge practical mock exams for every medical student in years 2, 3, 5, and potentially for this year also year 6.

Overall, our SU has adapted well to streamline the past few months and ensure our students are fully supported academically and kept up-to-date in relation to changes resulting from the ongoing Coronavirus situation. The faculty have been incredibly receptive to our concerns when they have

been raised by our year reps and have moved quickly to ensure adequate provisions are in place.

## Academics Team



- ✓ Published a full ICSMSU response with recommendations for the Faculty's NSS results.
- ✓ Pushed for clearer guidance on COVID isolation.
- ✓ Creation of a new Phase 1a Notebank.
- ✓ Ran a virtual External intercalators mingle and Q&A.
- ✓ Collaborated with the Faculty on an all-new intercalators' buddy scheme for BSc years.

### Management Group

It has been challenging for some of our Clubs and Societies to adapt their activities with consistently changing COVID guidelines, however we have been on-hand to assist them throughout the process and deal with any concerns and queries. We have completed individual one-to-one meetings with each of our ~65 clubs and societies under our Management Group to discuss their year ahead, their goals, and how we can best support them as an SU.

We have also slowly made progress towards a tighter integration with our Volunteering & Academic societies, a factor also mentioned by our students in the aforementioned NSS feedback. We have created an announcements group chat for the presidents which has better signposted us to be on-hand to provide guidance and support and we hope to keep working to provide more of a sense of community, potentially through running a volunteering and academics recognition dinner as is now conventional for our Sports clubs and Arts societies.

This year has also seen some changes with the administration of our sports clubs. We've engaged with our sports clubs in their transition to Imperial Athletes. As some have found the central communication from Move Imperial/ICU hasn't been up to the mark, we've therefore played a key role in relaying many of their concerns and answering their queries, as well as representing and advocating for them to the Sports board. Overall, we have been able to mitigate many of their concerns through transparent sharing of information and timely response to their queries.

More of the admin tasks have been allocated to specific people within the team and they are managing their time very efficiently. A lot of this burden falls upon our Management Group Treasurer, Pedro, who is spending a lot of time dealing with finance queries and supporting clubs and societies with their running, as well as the usual abundance of eActivities approvals. They have also produced a new finance training document to summarise and signpost information for our clubs and society treasurers, and updated our sources of funding guide.

We've also provided a number of opportunities for promotion of our ICSMSU Clubs and Societies. Our Instagram account (@icsmclubssocs) is designed to give updates on what's going on in our community with events, sports fixtures and results, conferences, shows and more! The team have massively improved our online presence and have been sharing a range of 'Society Stories' videos from the start of the year to showcase all the amazing societies that we have on offer within the medical school. We've also promoted their events to our 3000 weekly newsletter subscribers and have provided them with avenues to directly virtually interact with the incoming freshers during their first few weeks here.

Perhaps the biggest, and most long-awaited, achievement is the completion of our Clubs and Socs storage room in the basement of the Reynolds! At long last we were able to complete the refurbishment of the room, and order and put up the shelving units. Our clubs and societies are now in the process of shifting across all their kit out of the neighbouring common room and we hope to hold a waste amnesty for anything not moved across. Once this is done, we hope to once again free up the common room and initiate discussions on what we can do with the freed space in the short-term.

## Clubs & Socs Team



- ✓ Completed the long-awaited renovation of the Reynolds Clubs & Socs storage room.
- ✓ Creation of a new finance training guide for our Clubs and Societies.
- ✓ Represented ICSM clubs in the transition of sport at Imperial to a new phase: Imperial Athletes.
- ✓ Held 1-to-1 meetings with every society to help them improve and grow, as well as discussing COVID mitigations and how they can best run.
- ✓ Assisting promotion of activities through social media, new Zoom booking system and protocol for advertising via our newsletter.

### Entertainments

As is consistent across the Union, and to be expected, our Ents team have been hardest hit by the ongoing pandemic. However, they have shown exemplary resilience, tenacity, and determination to ensure our offerings can continue to engage our student body during the current crisis.

Our work to engage our incoming freshers begins whilst they are still offer holders and we have once again ensured we had a strong social media presence throughout results day, as well as an [intro video](#) produced by our social secretary, and committee introductions across social media.

Our theme for Freshers' Fortnight this year is **Star Wars: Return of the Phoenix**. Much work was put into the fortnight, with our plans adapting as the government guidance did. Multiple versions were planned and in the end the format unfortunately had to be mostly online. For the first time in a long time we moved away from our traditional line-up and we had a mix of events including online quiz nights, karaoke, speed-friending, puzzle nights and more. We were able to provide a few small group in-person events such as YoDAs and YoMAs (Mums & Dads), RAG Day and the Star Scavenger Hunt which received positive praise from our freshers. A silver lining to COVID is that this was our cheapest and most inclusive fortnight ever. Although government lockdown is set to continue from Thursday 5<sup>th</sup>



and chances of larger in-person events are no longer looking as fruit-bearing as they may have been earlier in the term, we are hoping to host a refreshers campaign of some degree in the new year.

We were also extremely grateful to our Faculty for allowing us the opportunity to help out in their teaching sessions across the first week of the Fortnight and thus maintain a level of in-person interactions. In addition to our usual welcome talks for both MBBS and BMB, we were also able to have members of our SU help run multiple workshops including a digital tools and learning session, 'Thriving at Imperial' academic tutoring session, getting to know your medical school, clinical communications role-plays and much more, as well as being present to signpost directions and general stewarding.

We all really enjoyed meeting and mingling with the new phase 1a cohort in-person across all the various sessions and had a lot of fun in doing so! Everything ran spectacularly smoothly, and we're seeing a motivated, engaged cohort who will inevitably grow to be young pioneers of the future. Indeed, already we have seen a record-number of nominations for our year 1 academic rep elections (27 in the running!) from across all walks of life and I only expect our wide-reaching engagement of the entire cohort to climb.

Whilst it can be argued from an entertainments perspective, this year we weren't able to have the usual buoyancy of our Freshers' Fortnight due to COVID, I equally think the main purpose of the Fortnight is to facilitate yeargroup bonding, ensure the SU is well signposted out as a key proponent of the student experience and embed comfort throughout the difficult transition to university life. And in that respect, albeit in a more formal setting, I believe we succeeded.



Our Raising & Giving (RAG) chair also sits on our Executive. The RAG committee have bonded exceptionally well. The team have responded very quickly to very topical issues, including running a Yoga session to raise funds for Black Minds Matter, and selling prints made by ICSM students for the Lebanese Red Cross. Other new events have included an Offer-holders quiz night and weekly Yoga sessions on Zoom and in total around £1500 have been raised for charity so far, with much more to come! The return of the RAG Day scavenger/bingo across London was also found to be the highlight for many of our first year MBBS and BMB students!

Finally, this week our Ents team have been running our Halloween competition with prizes for submissions in categories including best carved pumpkin, best themed baked good, best Halloween/autumn artwork and

best costumes. Winners will be announced shortly on Instagram @icsmevents.

## Ents Team

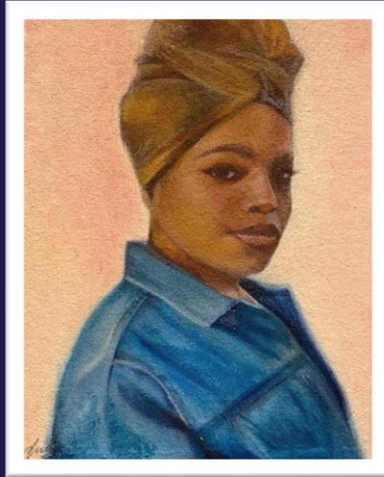
- ✓ Fully redesigned Freshers' Fortnight with a blend of small-group in-person activities, coupled with online virtual events.
- ✓ Raised ~£1500 for RAG (so far!) with all-new events including an offer-holders' quiz night and Yoga sessions.
- ✓ Worked with Clubs and Societies to help facilitate their events.
- ✓ Provided ICSM societies with a means of meeting their new freshers directly to make up for a lack of in-person Freshers' Fair.

### Welfare

In response to COVID-19, during lockdown our SU proactively ran a Student Support Fundraiser in an attempt to help raise funds for the overstretched Dean's fund for Medicine from students, families and alumni who were able to do so.

Additionally, we ran our Lockdown Lessons campaign featuring the stories and profiles of many students, and also staff, with their top advice and tips.

Other campaigns that have since been run include Black History Month which ended with a panel discussion event and an artwork competition which included portraits made by our students. Moving into November, we are now running our mental health campaign.



Winning portrait of Actress and BLM activist Ashley Jackson painted by one of our students, Andrea Perez Navarro.

As mentioned previously, early year rep elections took place for years 3, 5 and 6 Medicine and they have been ably assisted by Mabel, our Vice chair for wellbeing representatives. This year we introduced extra ICSM-specific training for our wellbeing reps and elected campaign officers so they can be better supported. We have already held our very first Student-Staff Liaison group (SSLG) meeting for our clinical years which was very productive and overall set a good tone for the rest of the year. SSLG meeting minutes will now be published on our website for all members of ICSM so they can read through the discussions that have taken place, and hopefully somewhat begin to close the feedback loop by allowing our students to see the actions that have resulted from their feedback.

In addition to training for our wellbeing representatives, as mentioned previously, for the first time ever we have introduced welfare and active bystander training to all members of our SU committee which was very well-received and ensures we are all better equipped to signpost support should the need arise.

Both myself and our welfare chair, Natania, continue to be in contact and signpost specific students where needed.

# Welfare Team



- ✓ Ran 2 successful campaigns including My Lockdown Lesson and currently Black History Month.
- ✓ Provided extra ICSM-specific training for our wellbeing representatives and campaign officers so they are better-equipped for their roles.
- ✓ Introduced compulsory welfare and active bystander training for all our SU committee.
- ✓ Reworking the welfare team structure and expanding the wider team.
- ✓ Improved liaison with the academics team allowing scope for streamlined collaboration.



**THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR FANTASTIC VOLUNTEERS. YOU REGULARLY GO ABOVE AND BEYOND TO FAR EXCEED THE EXPECTED DUTIES OF A VOLUNTEER, AND EVERYONE IS VERY GRATEFUL THAT YOU ALL WORK TIRELESSLY TO IMPROVE THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF ALL THOSE WITHIN OUR ICSM COMMUNITY.**



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