

Council report
By the Deputy President (Education) Jonathan Silver

NSS

The National Student Survey for final year undergraduates ended on 30 April, and thanks to some intensive work (frequent mail-merge emails, reminders to reps, pleas to Directors of Undergraduate Studies) we managed a response of over 58% of eligible students. This is a vast improvement on last year, when the survey company had to do a phone-a-thon in the last week to bring the rate up from about 40% to 50%. We have four winners of a free ICU Life Membership and a Summer Ball ents ticket, but I can't announce them here because of survey data protection stuff (and I'm not sure if the winners actually know yet).

The Union is almost entirely responsible for achieving this, because departments don't get involved. Their heart is in the right place, but they have a misguided idea that they are *not allowed* to promote the survey to students. This is a misapprehension based on a misinterpretation of the NSS rules, which state that staff can't attempt to influence students' answers in the survey and can't make students do the survey in their presence. (That much is common sense.) Unfortunately most staff take that to mean that they can't ask their students to do the survey. My successor must work to further the Education of these staff!

Rep Policy

After this was up for approval at the last spectre of a Council, the DPW and I have given it a slight change of direction. It was previously an Academic Representation Policy, and it hasn't lost any content, but we have merged the DPW's welfare representation content with it, to satisfy the Union's need for policy about welfare representation. Now the new Representation Policy is the single source of truth for Year Rep and Dep Rep job descriptions, including both academic and welfare functions. It's also several miles long, but all relevant and, if you're a hack, quite interesting.

The appendix will be a strange beast. One part is a list of faith societies, which is necessary to complete the job description for the Interfaith Officer. That's the DPW's bit. The DPE's bit is epic and, in its current infancy, is already about 25 pages long. So far it has lists of representatives, what meetings they attend and whom they report to, and diagrams relating each and every year of all 112 unique undergraduate degree programmes at Imperial to a year rep. It will, of course, be a live document, constantly reflecting College's departmental and programme structure. The DPE will be responsible for maintaining it, but will need to get any changes ratified by the Representation and Welfare Board. When the first version is complete, I will probably bring it to Council for information.

Strategic Education Committee

I've prepared our annual presentation to the Strategic Education Committee. Unfortunately we've had to limit the number of topics discussed, as we have very limited time, but we will be discussing our work over the last year (betcha didn't know), advising on student access to external examiners' reports (why it matters and how to do it) and telling them that we'll be discussing feedback-on-student-feedback in our presentation to Welfare Day on 2 June. The more obvious issues to discuss (assessment feedback, for instance) are not worth mentioning: College know about them and are doing about as much as they can to fix them, and are arguably ahead of us on those issues.

Website

The Information and Advice section of the Union website is getting a makeover. The Student Adviser, Membership Services Manager, DPW and I are writing or rewriting large sections, and it will be much more useful and comprehensive. It'll go live soon.

Management Reps

I had a nice little false start a week or two ago. There are degree programmes in Biology, Biochemistry and Chemistry that include a year in management, which is a year spent entirely in the Business School. Apart from single business modules (BEST, for instance) here and there, this is pretty much the only teaching the Business School gives to undergraduates. To the very best of my understanding, they were absolutely disconnected from the rep network for that year. So I prepared the case for the creation of an extra Year Rep, called the Management Year Rep, for each of those three Staff-Student Committees, who would return to their home departments to represent the cohort who were outside the department, and I even got some prospective reps on board.

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Then came the bombshell that the Business School actually already have an undergraduate staff-student committee! Thanks for telling me, businessmen. Unfortunately this was entirely off my radar and I have been unable to offer them any support, training or advice this year. I am going to make sure that they are brought in-house, given the training and administrative services that all reps deserve, and incorporate them into the new rep structure.

Other stuff

Sorry I'm not at the meeting: I'm out of London today to drive my mum to a hospital appointment. I'm sure you'll forgive me. Particularly after there weren't even enough councillors last time to achieve a quorum to wish me happy birthday!