

Student Experience Survey 2012 Response



Contents

Contents	2
Introduction	3
Health & Wellbeing	4
Money & Housing	14
Students with Disabilities	22
Faith	26
Academic Support	30
Social Life & Community	36

Online companion to this report

Online appendices to this report can be found at imperialcollegeunion.org/sesresponse.



Introduction

With the changing landscape of higher education, the 'student experience' is often referred to as an important concept, but seems to have an ever changing definition. This report goes some way to examining some of the services and activities which could be considered to contribute to the student experience at Imperial and gives suggestions on how to improve them.

This report is the Union's first ever substantive response to the annual Student Experience Survey. The survey was undertaken in November 2012 by 4,517 students; the participation was skewed somewhat towards undergraduates who formed 76% of the respondents. This response sets out clear recommendations, both collaborative and individual, for both the Union and the College.

The Union is committed to running and responding to the Student Experience Survey from now on. This will hopefully become a key tool for the College and the Union to better understand the needs and wants of students and how to further improve the learning and social environment of Imperial College London.



Becky Lane

Deputy President (Welfare) 2012/13



Becky Lane

Deputy President (Welfare)

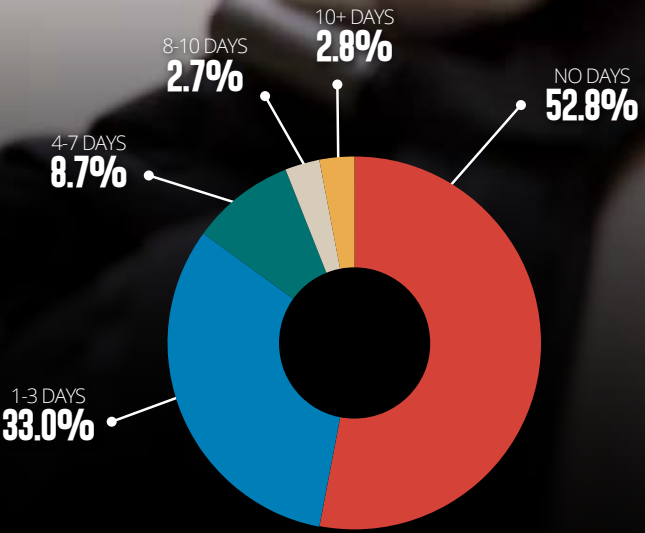
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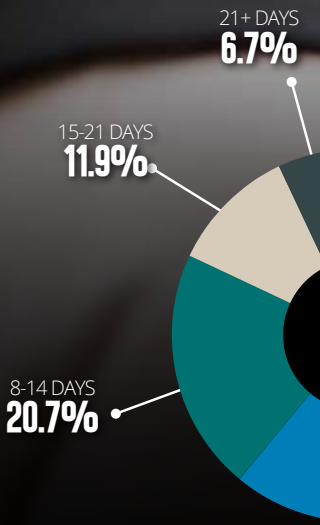
Health & Wellbeing

The College and the Union provide or outsource a wide range of services to support well-being – from the Health Centre and Union Advice Centre, to the networks of student societies. We work together to ensure the health and well-being of Imperial College students.

% OF STUDENTS MISSING TIME FROM COLLEGE & HOW LONG

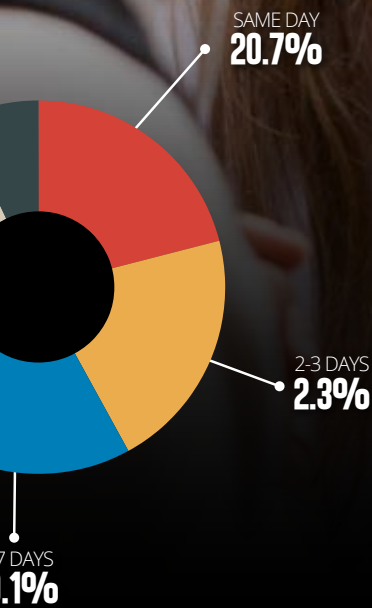


WAITING TIMES REPORT

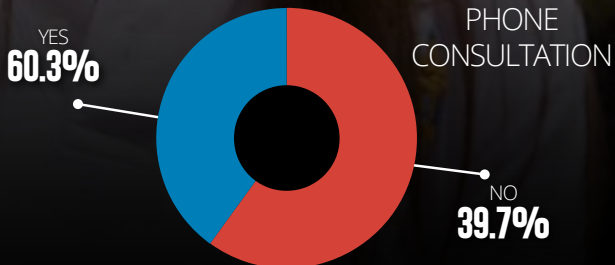
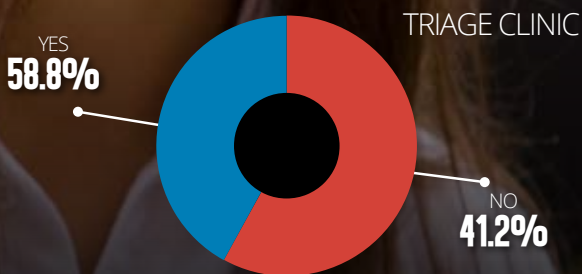


assist students when it comes to maintaining their health and of Student Academic Reps and Welfare Officers. They all is looked after.

SUPPORTED FOR APPOINTMENTS



TRIAGE CLINIC AND PHONE CONSULTATION SERVICE AWARENESS



Health Centre

The Health Centre is a vital resource to Imperial College London students, particularly those based in South Kensington and a majority of students responding to the survey have used the service. Unsurprisingly 61% of students not based in South Kensington haven't accessed it.

More needs to be done to support students not living within the catchment area of the Health Centre to locate their local GP Surgery or Health Centre. From the free text responses it appears that for some students living in Halls, the Health Centre was unable to register them. Students on other campuses have faced challenges with registration as well.

The time between booking an appointment and seeing a doctor needs to improve. Approximately a quarter of students report waiting between four and seven days between booking an appointment and seeing doctor at the Health Centre, with a further quarter having to wait eight to 14 days. From

the free text responses it seems that some students opt to remain registered with GP's at home outside of London as a result. Not only is this potentially dangerous to students health, but it may affect attendance levels at College and have an impact on their education.

For students feeling unwell or needing advice, they should expect a friendly and supportive service. However, free text comments relate to the poor customer services adopted by Health Centre staff, and in particular the reception staff, with words such as 'rude' and 'unhelpful' appearing frequently. Some students commented they avoided using the Health Centre because of the poor service and the way they were treated by staff.

Some of the issues that students have highlighted with the Health Centre could be alleviated with alternative ways of communicating to students the ways in which they can seek advice and treatment.

It doesn't serve some W post codes that many students live in.

I don't know where the nearest health centre is to Silwood Park.

Survey results demonstrated that two in five students were unaware of the GP telephone consultation service and almost half were unaware of the triage emergency clinic, both of which could negate the need for an appointment. In a recent change to health care provision on campus, Postgraduate students living outside the registration area can no longer access any facilities at the health centre. Recently a paper about this was submitted to Union Council to discuss this issue and we hope to work closely with College to remedy this situation.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the College to ensure that the number of appointments available is increased
2. For the College and Union to work together to ensure students living away from South Kensington have details of their nearest NHS GP
3. For the College to work with Health Centre to encourage their staff to treat all students with courtesy and respect, improving the customer experience
4. For the College and Union to work together to improve the promotion and communication of the range of services that the Health Centre provides

The doctors seem more interested in getting you out as soon as possible rather than taking the time to talk.

They are rather rude and seem to care very little about their patients.

Counselling Service

440 students have used the Counselling Service in the past year, offering short-term counselling to all registered students of Imperial College London with counsellors available at three campuses.

Almost a third of the students who responded to the survey indicating they had used the service said the number of sessions offered were less than they wanted, with a number of free text comments calling for an increase in the number of sessions provided, or the opportunity for a follow-up session with a counsellor if needed.

Although a majority of students haven't needed to use the Counselling Service, a fifth of students said they either did not understand what the service was, didn't think it would help, didn't know how to access it or didn't feel comfortable using it.

There is arguably a need for the service to be better promoted to students so they know what is available, what to expect and how to get an initial appointment. More students could potentially benefit from the service if the information about it was clearer and more accessible. A majority of the free text comments relating to the service related to availability of appointments (during lecture times), and the waiting times to get an appointment.

It should be noted that there were an equal number of comments praising the service as well as those that felt it could improve.

I would be apprehensive about using the counselling service as I don't know what it involves/how to access it or where it is etc.

Students need a counselling service that is flexible, which can fit around our educational commitments.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

5. For the College to ensure all students accessing the Counselling Service are provided with a follow-up appointment sometime after their course of counselling is finished
6. For the College to improve the promotion of the Counselling Service, especially within academic departments
7. For the College to ensure provision of flexible appointments, including appointments outside teaching hours

The counselling service was excellent, but the 8 sessions permitted and funded by the college was too few. I then had to seek counselling elsewhere.

Don't know what this is or how to access it.

Union Advice Centre

Imperial College Union's Advice Centre offers students with a wealth of support and advice on a range of issues, whether they are academic or employment related, or if students are experiencing financial worries or accommodation problems.

The Union Advice Centre is an important resource for students, offering impartial advice, but students need to be more aware that it is available and accessible to them. However, students said they were unaware the Union Advice Centre could offer them advice on employment rights (58%), legal issues (56%) or personal issues such as drugs, sexual health, alcohol and personal safety (42%).

Must be very poorly advertised

Make students' advice more easy to access

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

8. For the Union to build greater awareness of the services the Advice Centre can provide to students
9. For the Union to work more closely with departmental staff to increase their awareness of the Advice Centre

Don't know what it offers or where to get to it - I may have used it if I had been aware of its availability.

Personal Safety

A majority of those taking part in the survey were based in South Kensington, an area with a very low crime rate. It's therefore unsurprising that a majority of students reported they generally felt safe in their local area. Other campuses had similar results, excluding Hammersmith, where almost one in ten students did not feel safe - twice as many as any other campus.

However, even in low-crime areas such as South Kensington, some students felt unsafe at night. Some of the free text comments were in relation to areas close to College, such as the area around Evelyn Gardens, Prince's Gardens, or the top of North End Road in Hammersmith. Many students coming to Imperial College London will be new to the city, and may benefit from a clear guide to the safety and crime levels of various areas of London. This may assist them when visiting different areas and considering where they may live whilst studying at Imperial.

Poor lighting was a recurring theme when it came to feeling unsafe, with the area around Xenia Hall and the walk between Sunningdale and the Silwood campus considered particularly dark and unsafe. It would be prudent to continue discussions with local authorities to ensure pathways to and from College campuses are well lit where practicable.

A handful of students spoke about cycling – of bikes being stolen and the dangers of cycling on London roads. Despite excellent bike storage provision some students spoke of the need for increased facilities. One person commented on the increase of conmen operating in and around South Kensington, and there were a number of references to Exhibition Road being dangerous to pedestrians.

It is hard to find out what parts of London are safe and which are not, it would be nice if you provided some advice.

The number of conmen around campus is disturbing.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

10. For the Union and College to work together to provide more advice about travelling in London, whether to/from campuses or on public transport, particularly at night
11. For the College to work with providers to ensure adequate lighting on the streets between campuses and halls where practicable, and to advertise safe well lit routes around areas known to accommodate a large number of Imperial students
12. For the College to continue work to increase the number of bike stands on campuses for students to securely store their bikes

I live in Clapham Junction; it's cheaper but feels less safe! Accommodation for postgrad students must be cheaper!

I always return home late at midnight from campus. It is safe around here.

Money & Housing

Studying at a university in one of the most expensive cities in the world can be therefore important that students have the most up to date scholarship and budgeting information.

The survey contained no specific questions regarding respondents opinions about money and housing, but many questions included these subjects, prompting us to include this chapter. More work is undertaken in future to ascertain students' opinions on these issues.



extremely financially challenging for many students. It is
necessary information and housing advice.

about housing and money issues. The free text responses to
Given the breadth of feeling in this area it is suggested that
uses.



Scholarships, Bursaries & Tuition Fees

The College offers a nationally competitive bursary scheme for undergraduates, arranged with the support of Imperial College Union and approved by the Office for Fair Access. The Union considers there to be room for improvement in ensuring that students in genuine need are able to access all sources of funding. A single, simple, searchable, College-wide directory of all available sources of funding should be created, rather than relying on departments to keep varied information up to date in various formats on their websites.

70% of survey respondents rated the advice about scholarships, bursaries, loans and hardship funding given by the Student Hub as good or very good; this compares to 86% who rated the responses to general enquiries as good or very good.

The Union is supporting a campaign by representatives of international students and societies to improve transparency around the setting and annual uplifts of international tuition fees. The Union's Advice Centre has also recently handled a number of cases of international students who have experienced problems when paying their fees; a number of students have expressed concern, to both the Union's Advice Centre and through the free text responses to this survey, related to the way Credit Control have handled their circumstances.

If you could improve one aspect of your experience this term what would it be?

Advanced knowledge of the additional funding available to me as part of my scholarship.

Wish there are funding opportunities to support, at least partial, tuition fees for UG who experience extreme change in their financial circumstance.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

13. For the College to create a definitive, College-wide library of scholarships, bursaries and sources of funding with clear information on who is entitled to apply
14. For the Union to continue to lobby the College for transparency around international tuition fee increases
15. For the Union to work with the College to develop further guidance relating to the credit control processes which are employed, working towards how an appropriate balance can be achieved between the College's requirements for financial integrity and their pastoral responsibilities for students

What has been the worst feature of your student experience this term?

Finance department sending reminders about tuition fees even though I replied and indicated that I am waiting for tuition fee loan from Student Loan Company.

Living Costs

At present, there is little information specific to Imperial available about how to minimise living costs. Information and advice tailored to Imperial students on how to live well and cheaply is something that could be delivered via the Union's website. It is apparent from the free text responses that many students in charge of their finances for the first time find this challenging and may appreciate extra help. It is apparent from the free text comments that students enjoy the flexibility of employment offered by the Union and the College to earn supplementary income, it is important that these are widely advertised, including information on the student loan and bursary system.

What has been the worst feature of your student experience this term?

Managing my finances in London which is extremely expensive.

Worrying about money next year (when I will have have higher expenses as the College doesn't provide accomodation for older students)

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

16. For the Union to investigate providing money, banking and budgeting advice on imperialcollegeunion.org
17. For the Union to investigate the demand for an emergency loan system
18. For the Union and College to work together to advertise the range of employment options available to students within the College in one place

What has been the best feature of your student experience this term?

Being able to work at the Union for some extra money and hence stop worrying about spending more than I can afford.

Private Accommodation

The Union feels that better resources can be provided to support students in finding quality private accommodation safely, legally and fairly – without undue influence from private housing companies or estate agents.

76% of survey respondents indicated they lived outside of halls operated by the College. Of those indicating they lived in private rented accommodation, 69% rated the accommodation advice provided by the Student Hub as good or very good.

Imperial College Union will commit to investigating the possibility of providing an Alternative Accommodation Guide, and will work to ensure that College's accommodation advice is delivered in the interests of students and not other parties.

If you could improve one aspect of your experience this term what would it be?

Accommodation centre gives sound and reasonable advice when asked about private accommodation. However the listings of private accommodation they have are completely unaffordable and obscure.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

19. For the Union to work with the College to improve the Private Accommodation Talks
20. For the Union to investigate the possibility of providing an Alternative Accommodation Guide

What has been the best feature of your student experience this term?

Dealing with privately rented accommodation issues.

If you could improve one aspect of your experience this term what would it be?

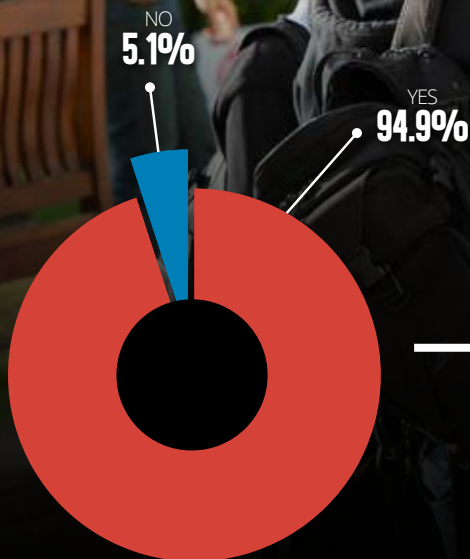
Lack of information on accommodation that is on the lower spectrum of cost.

Students with Disab

Ensuring that students with disabilities are supported and enabled to reach the include designing services to support international students and countering fal

Whilst students should be under no obligation or pressure to declare their disa order to make an informed choice.

% OF STUDENTS IDENTIFYING AS
HAVING A DISABILITY

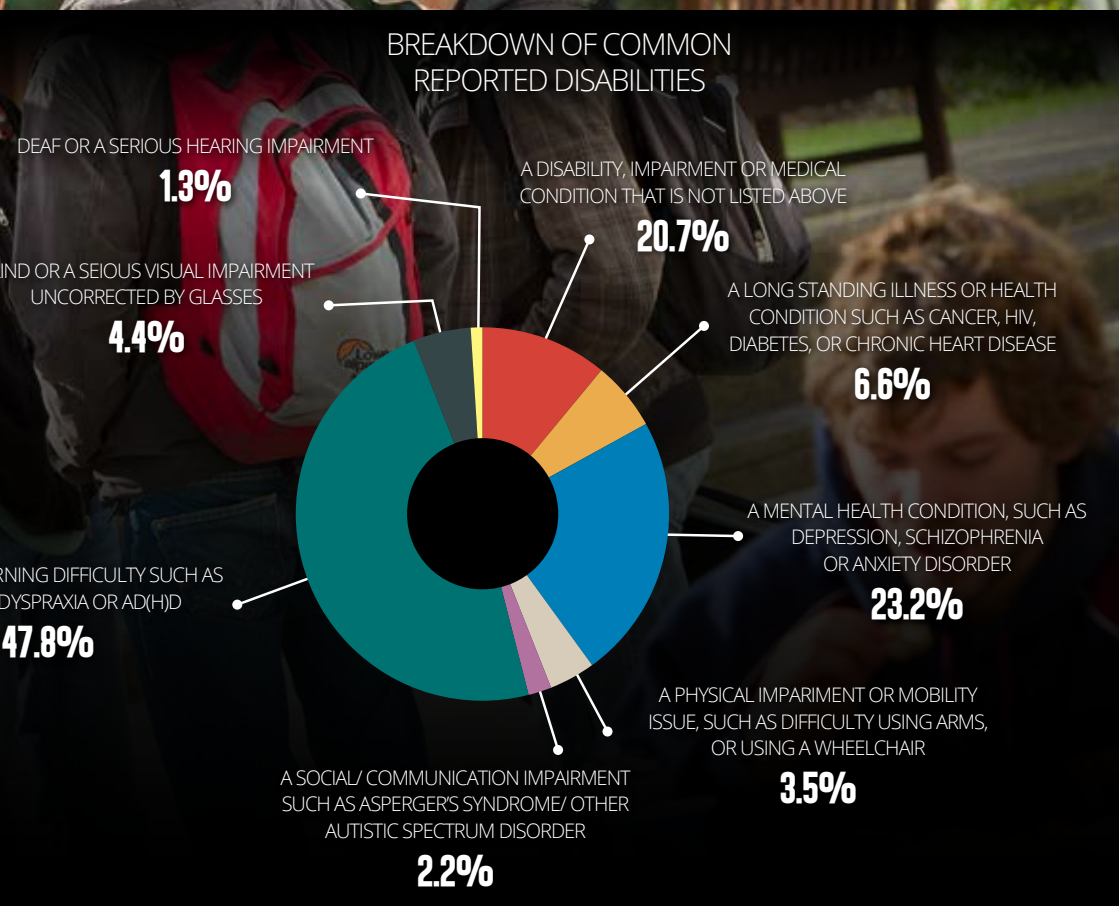


A SPECIFIC LEARN
DYSLEXIA,

ilities

their potential will be a significant challenge. Key areas of work
are based on assumptions about disabilities within the student body.

Disability students need to be aware of the assistance available in



Disabilities

Significant numbers of students were unaware of the full scope of College's definition of disability. They therefore did not identify themselves as disabled and did not identify the disability advice service as a potential source of help. In addition students commonly did not know what support or assistance was available from both their academic department and the DAS. Increased information within induction packs and promotional material throughout College may raise students' awareness of the scope of the DAS and assistance available.

There seems to be confusion across College with regards to what declaring a disability means and the processes by which this information is shared. Data about disabilities sits with Registry, the Disability Advisory Service and academic departments. Procedures need to be clear and effectively communicated to

students, the onus for doing this sits with the University. Students should not be worried about who knows about their disability and necessary adjustments should be made without students needing to declare to numerous parties.

The awareness and acceptance of disability varies with cultural and national origin. We welcome College's hiring of a specific DAS staff member with responsibility for international students.

The importance of an effective personal tutoring system is covered in greater detail in the chapter 'Academic Support'; one of their key roles, however, is connecting students with the support services they require. We ask that College gives clear guidance and refresher training to personal tutors to ensure they are informed about what services are available.

I have been getting much better and managing my condition well for most of my time here with antidepressants and therapy. If I felt my condition was getting out of control again, I would declare it.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

21. For the Union to work with the College to increase the awareness of the definition of disability and increase the promotion of the DAS
22. For the College to ensure there are clearly defined, well publicised procedures and confidentiality statements relating to the disclosure of disabilities
23. For the Union to work with the DAS and International Student Support to raise awareness of disability services among international students
24. For the College to ensure time in personal tutor meetings is allocated to educate students about the disability services which are available

There was no information about how my department or the disability advisory service could assist me in my studies with my struggle with mental illness.

Faith

Imperial College is home to a number of active faith communities; to keep these supports ongoing interfaith dialogue.



When groups are active and collaborative, the Chaplaincy maintains and



Faith

There seems to be some confusion from students as to what services the Chaplaincy provides and where it is located. This suggests that ensuring its services are effectively communicated to all students is important. It is necessary to target all students, not just those already engaged with faith activities, to ensure at Imperial College remains an environment of tolerance, acceptance and ongoing dialogue.

Of the 259 survey respondents who indicated that they had used the Chaplaincy 77% rated the service as good or very good.

What's a chaplaincy?

Need to promote their activities more as it is something I would like to do more.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

25. For the Union to work with the College to ensure that more students are aware of what the Chaplaincy does, where it is located and how they can interact with it. In particular the functions of the Chaplaincy that are not directly linked to a specific religious group for example meditation sessions for exam stress.
26. For the Union and College to continue to support and facilitate interfaith dialogue led by the Chaplaincy and promote this work

Why do we have this? Not sure that the college should be supporting religious groups.

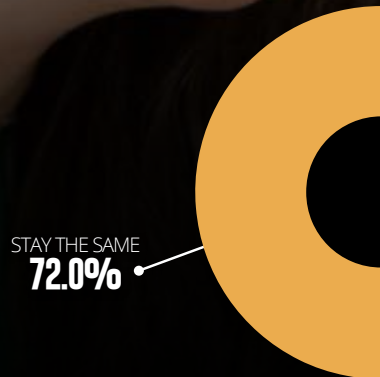
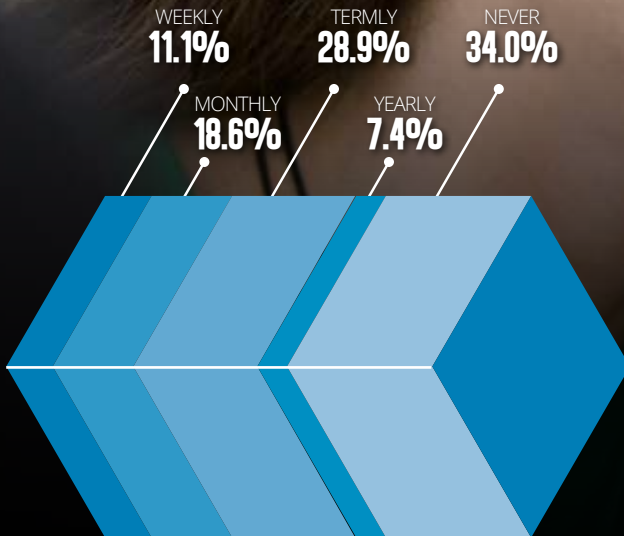
I have used the mediation sessions that are held in the chaplaincy - they are very good.

Academic Support

All students studying will require academic support to varying extents during their studies. Academic support provides a range of functions to students, but there is a huge variation between individuals. The amount of contact a student makes in a serious welfare situation and hence play a critical

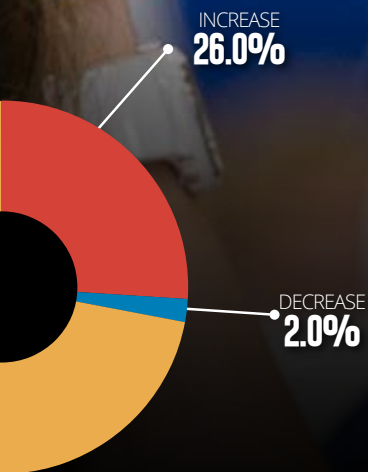
HOW OFTEN STUDENTS MEET WITH ACADEMIC STAFF TO DISCUSS PASTORAL CARE

WOULD STUDENTS LIKE TO INCREASE/STAY THE SAME/DECREASE/STOP

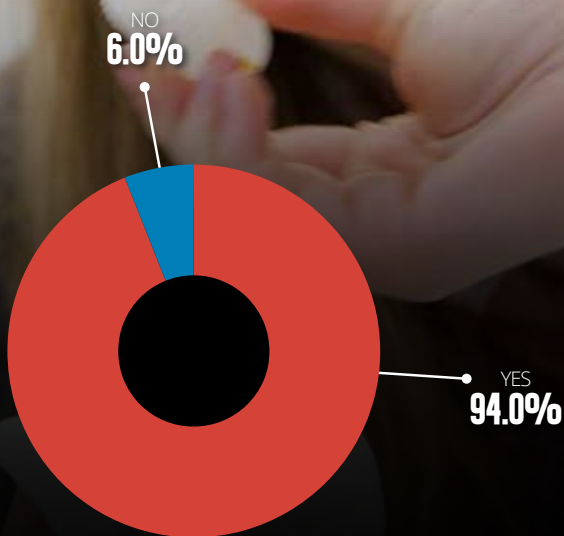


their time at Imperial. Personal Tutors and Supervisors provide
als. Often Personal Tutors and Supervisors are on the first
role in pastoral care.

LIKE THIS TO INCREASE/
STAY THE SAME



SHOULD YOUR PERSONAL TUTOR BE AWARE OF
YOUR ACADEMIC PROGRESS?



Personal Tutors

The importance of an effective personal tutoring system has been raised in almost every survey and focus group Imperial College Union has held with students in recent years. Key to pastoral care, academic development and for employability (by acting as a reference), we call on College to provide a more solid foundation for personal tutors on a College-wide basis, and for excellent tutors to be celebrated and publicised. When asked, 34% of students commented that they never meet a member of departmental staff specifically to discuss pastoral care, and 26% of students said they would like the frequency of these meetings to increase.

An overwhelming 82% thought that their personal tutor should be aware of their academic progress. We have also recommended in the NSS response 2012 that College develop an app, based on Registry student data, that gives personal tutors simple access to the academic progress of their tutees. It is encouraging that College's ICT department has agreed to look into the feasibility of this project, and we look forward to working with them on its active development over the forthcoming academic year.

What's the best thing about Imperial?

My personal tutor being there for support through a difficult term.

What's the worst thing about Imperial?

Just the fact that my personal tutor does not seem to care. I tried to contact him a few times but he didn't even bother replying to my e-mails.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

27. For the College to conduct a comprehensive review of personal tutor system, with examples of best practice from across the sector examined.
28. For the College to undertake development of an online personal tutor logging system
29. For the College to ensure a more developed training and support program for all personal tutors is created, including regular refresher training
30. For the College to ensure academic progress information is made available to personal tutors as standard practice

What's the single thing you would do to improve your experience of College?

More initial advice on how to organise workload/ which are most important bits of work to focus upon.

More tutorials, they are very useful.

Student Academic Representation

The network of student academic representatives forms an important feedback mechanism for staff members and informal peer support to other students. 61% of students felt that the year rep system in their department was either good or very good. The number of students who answered 'Don't Know' to this question was worrying – the Union has already made steps towards remedying this by introducing the Find my Rep and Rep A-Z functions on the Union website. However it is important that the presence of representatives is continually promoted through a variety of means.

What has been the best feature of your student experience this term?

Becoming a year rep - get a good look at Imperial from the inside.

The student reps themselves are good, but the student staff committee basically ignore them.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

31. For the Union to maintain two Rep weeks a year and other activities to ensure that the level of awareness of the academic representation system further increases

“ Better quality control of mail from dep/year reps would improve my opinion of the representation system no end. ”

Social Life & Commu

The social life of a student whilst at Imperial can have far ranging positive and n both the Union and the College provide a range of activities and opportunities studying at Imperial. It is vital to the student experience to ensure that all stud for.

SATISFACTION WITH WELFARE SUPPORT
OFFERED BY HALLS

SATISFACTION OF
OFFERED

GOOD OR VERY GOOD

81.1%

GOOD OR V

75.8

unity

negative effects upon their experience. It is important that
to cater for students from the diverse range of backgrounds
ents regardless of student status or campus feel equally catered

F SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
D BY HALLS

SATISFACTION WITH UNION'S SOCIAL
OPPORTUNITIES

VERY GOOD
3%

GOOD OR VERY GOOD
58.0%

Halls

With the majority of first year undergraduate students opting to live in Imperial College Halls of Residence and the wardening team providing front line pastoral care, halls life is an important aspect of both community and social life. Most students who currently live in halls thought that the wardening system was either good or very good. 18% of students living in halls found the wardening only satisfactory or poor, but only 2% described it as very poor. There are similar levels of satisfaction with regards to the social activities offered by halls with 76% of students

ranking them either good or very good and only 2% considering them very poor. However some of the elements touched upon in the free text comments highlight the need for students in different halls to feel like they are having the same opportunities. There are some comments in reference to travel times to the campus from halls, although there was not a direct question, this would appear to be an area that requires further research.

A wider variety of events would have been good.

The halls are of a very inconvenient distance from the university, adding to the cost of living dramatically and wasting a lot of time travelling.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

32. For the College to preserve and celebrate the work undertaken by wardening teams as they are evidently central to the first year undergraduate experience.
33. For the College to ensure that students in every hall experience the same calibre and variety of events provided by some.
34. For the College to undertake a full investigation on the impact that the distance of halls of residence has upon the student experience.
35. For the College to undertake work to ensure that students don't feel like finance is a barrier to participation in halls life.

I find it quite problematic that one need[s] to pay to participate in the events that the halls arrange. It is not enough that we have to pay huge amounts to study here and live here, but to also have a good time and find friends in our halls we need to pay.

Buddy System

The Buddy System is an area of improvement with a large number of students rating it only satisfactory and a substantive minority rating it as poor. A lack of further questions on this topic and no qualitative feedback makes it difficult to judge why this is the case. Many students did rate the scheme good or very good demonstrating a mixed experience for participants which should be explored. Further research with participants (both new the incoming students and those who volunteered for the scheme) is needed in order to address this and to ensure the good experiences of many participants is replicated across the board.

What has been the best feature of your student experience this term?

The buddy system as been great. As an academic parent, I'm really enjoying myself.

What's the worst thing about Imperial?

There should be more buddy lunches and events.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

36. For the Union to continue to work in conjunction with Departmental Societies to expand the buddy system and increase participation year on year.
37. For the College to ensure that all academic departments to provide a buddies lunch or similar opportunity within the first two weeks of term

I think I had a buddy in 1st year but never saw him, more effective guidance from someone that's been there might have helped.

Social Opportunities provided by the Union

This proved to be one of the weaker areas identified by students. 27% found the social opportunities only satisfactory or poor, and 30% do not get involved. It is important to highlight that some students have solely considered Clubs, Societies & Projects in answering this question and this is evident from the free text responses. In future making it clear what social opportunities we are referring to would help eliminate some ambiguity about what areas of the Union are being rated.

In the question asking students to identify the best part of their student experience, 288 students referred directly to a Club, Society or Project run by the Union. This corresponds with other research undertaken by the Union where 89% were satisfied or greater with the range of Clubs, Societies & Projects on offer at Imperial. However it is clear that there are a number of students currently dissatisfied with some of the social opportunities offered by the Union.

It is good that we have so many clubs and societies to join at Imperial. It makes it very easy to have fun and meet new people across the university.

So many clubs and societies! Too bad that my schedule as a postgrad student is crammed.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

38. For the Union to further develop volunteering opportunities provided by the Union to expand the range of activities students can engage with.
39. For the Union to develop an accreditation scheme to reflect involvement with Clubs, Societies, Projects and volunteering opportunities.

What has been the best feature of your student experience this term?

Having the opportunity to join clubs and societies of my interest and meeting people with same interests as mine both academically as well as non-academically.

Alcohol

One key theme that emerges from the qualitative data is that many students are off put from participating by the perception that many events are too focussed on alcohol. Most of the social aspects appear to be bar/club nights and often focused around drinking. It is clear that some students simply do not feel able to participate any event where alcohol will be consumed. Looking at introducing and publicising more events which don't centre on alcohol may improve participation rates and help dispel perceptions.

Most of the organised events are aimed at people who like socialising with alcohol drinking, not much of a choice is given for a non-alcohol drinking students.

It would nice if there were some non alcohol orientated activities.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

40. For the Union to provide and publicise more events which do not centre around drinking alcohol.

Feel kinda uncomfortable because most of the events organised involve alcohol, which is something I don't like being around.

Postgraduate Students and Other Campuses

It is clear that there are groups of students who feel unsupported by both the Union and College when it comes to their experience; many of these students are postgraduates, both those based at the South Kensington campus and elsewhere. It is clear that work needs to be done to remove the barriers to postgraduate participation in the Union and to nurture and support the communities based at other campuses.

The Union and College have collaborated to deliver Hub on Tour events visiting Other Campuses to help promote what we do and how we can help students. This also helped towards removing the barrier of distance and brought services directly to students.

The Union has also been working with students groups at other campuses including the Silwood Students' Union & Hammersmith Student Community to ensure they are getting as much support as South Ken Based clubs, and help to develop new activities.

The Union does not cater for postgraduate students and I feel unwelcome at the Union.

As a student based at Silwood, transport to the London campuses is poor and makes going for London-based union events unrealistic.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

41. For the Union to provide more support to communities and groups based at other campuses.
42. For the Union to commission and publicise research into how to better support students based in Hammersmith, St Marys and Silwood Park.

There are no social opportunities at Hammersmith Campus. This issue has been raised for several years without any change. The Hammersmith Student Community which I am part of is trying to organise social events but the support from the College is very poor.

Imperial College Union

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