



**Imperial College Union Communications Committee
3 June 2019**

AGENDA ITEM NO.	7
TITLE	Leadership Elections 2019
AUTHOR	Head of Student Voice & Communications
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>Leadership Elections 2019 was conducted with success in varying degrees across nine metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnout • PG engagement • Complaints handling • Candidate satisfaction • Training access • More positions filled • More candidates per position • Diversity of candidates and voters • Management improvements
PURPOSE	For the Committee to review the outcomes of LE19 against the KPIs previously outlined.
DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED	For the committee to note and feedback on the conduct, outcome and work being undertaken in preparation for LE20.

Introduction

The Leadership Elections were conducted between 4 February and 15 March 2019 with 8, 121 Imperial students participating. This represented 61.3 percent of Undergraduates and 20 percent of Postgraduates. It also represented the highest ever number of voters in a Union election on record.

The following is a summary of LE19 outcomes based on the success targets identified ahead of the process. It also includes recommendations on areas that need to be addressed before the next poll is conducted.

LE19 Aims

The following objectives were identified as key goals prior to the elections:

KPI	Measure
Turnout	40 percent <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 35.65 in 17/18• 36.79 in 16/17
Higher satisfaction among candidates	Post-election Candidates' Survey/number of process complaints/issues raised at Council and online
Speedier and more transparent handling of complaints	Average resolution time in new system
More candidates standing per position	An average of 2 per position
Increased Training access	Online traffic to training Hub and candidates' briefing numbers
More positions filled	Fewer by-election positions post LE19
Diversity of candidates and voters	Relative to Imperial demographics with a focus on: ethnicity and origin
PG engagement	Maintain PG gains made during AE18
Rehabilitate the Union's reputation around elections and re-inspire trust.	Lack of process complaints, absence of chaos, internal feedback

Turnout:

Turnout for LE19 as a percentage of the voter population exceeded 17/18 by over 5 percent and was just above the target of 40 percent.

More vacancies filled:

The aim is to have all representative positions filled within the Union so members may benefit accordingly. Since it is not possible for the centralized Union team to control for interest in all society positions, the general aim was to fill more positions than in previous years with the main positions being the main indicator of interest.

Both were achieved. In 18/19, 354 positions were contested in the Summer Bye-elections, representing 47 percent of LE18 positions. This year, there are 277 positions from LE19 which must be reopened, representing 35 percent of total positions. In terms of major positions, there was 41 percent more interest in the positions in the OT positions.

Positions	2018 standing	2019 standing	Change
Imperial College Union President	10	9	-1
Deputy President (Education)	1	5	+4
Deputy President (Welfare)	2	1	-1
Deputy President (Clubs & Societies)	1	4	+3
Deputy President (Finance & Services)	3	5	+2

PG engagement:

The aim of LE19 was to continue making gains in the PG community in keeping with the performance in Autumn. The elections saw a 7 percent growth in Postgraduate participation over 2018, with growth in PGR voters up by 7 percent and PGT voter participation up by 6.4 percent.

There were also PG candidates for OT positions, including Union President, with one Postgraduate successfully elected to the position of DPE. Meanwhile two PGs ran for DP (Clubs & Societies), two for DP (Welfare), and one for President.

For Graduate Student Union President, there were the same number of candidates as in 2018. However, votes for this position grew by 46 percent from 753 to 514. This is hardly satisfactory, considering there were 9,603 eligible PG voters of which 1, 927 participated overall.

Candidates per position:

The target was an average of 2 per position and while this was not realised, the average candidates per position came in at 1.5 across the board, only slightly higher than last year's 1.4. higher for College-wide positions. For the main positions in which the central Union has more ability to control for interest, there were 4.8

candidates on average in LE19 versus 3.4 percent last year.

Diversity of candidates and voters

In keeping with the Union's general diversity strategy, there is an ongoing effort to have more students from diverse ethnic backgrounds and countries of origin run for positions and engage in the elections.

Although there is currently no means of ascertaining ethnicity, fee paying status of candidates may prove useful in identifying country of origin. In terms of ethnic diversity, it is noteworthy that there is a more diverse OT team for 2019/20 and that every Liberation position attracted more than 2 candidates, with the exception of Disabilities which attracted none and will be reopened in the summer.

Training access

In keeping with the aim to be more accessible to students while maintaining convenience, both online and face to face sessions were offered. Candidates had access to written material on Writing Manifestos and Running Inclusive Campaigns through the Union's new Training Hub. These were supported by face-to-face drop in sessions conducted by the Head of Student Experience. The traditional Candidates' Briefing was also conducted before campaigning with about 60 candidates attending.

Higher satisfaction among candidates

It was important that candidates had a good experience engaging in Union democracy particularly in the face of problems in recent years. The success measures were the number of process complaints, responses to Candidates' Survey and the proliferation and tone of issues raised at Union Council on the back of the elections. The candidate survey has not been completed, however there were only a handful of process complaints and most related to the hotly contested presidential race.

The process complaints were handled according to procedure in as timely a manner as possible. However, a rule review which is already underway for LE19 should help address some concerns going forward. It's also proposed that student facing managers not act as Deputy returning Officers as it's felt that they are prone to more conflicts or perceptions of conflict if they are known personally to candidates and are more likely to have their training and support role compromised after the elections.

Wellbeing measures were built into the elections to help candidates for whom the process is stressful. They also received more timely and relevant communications about and at key milestones, had faster response rates to queries through careful management of the elections inbox, and dates were arranged to make the process more convenient for students.

Speedier and more transparent handling of complaints

There was an overhaul of the complaints system to make it more efficient and to

ensure complainants received communications regarding both status and outcomes of their complaints. This was done through a new automated system and by creating separate processes for general queries and for official complaints.

This resulted in quicker handling of complaints, and a less stressful process for Deputy Returning Officers. However, the new system had weaknesses such as a propensity to send emails to candidates about outcomes of complaints without registering the comments inputted from DROs about why their complaints were upheld or not upheld. The Systems team will be ensuring this is corrected for future elections. Overall, the new system is considered the way forward and was a success.

Improved elections management

Considering the reputational damage caused by management challenges of previous cycles, this was a key success measure. Despite the two process complaints relating to one particular hotly contested race, there was generally good feedback about the conduct of the cycle. There were no major incidents, the relationship with media groups was restored with student media delivering the elections debate with facilitation from the project team and the results were delivered without incident. Project management also improved considerably with the use of Teams as a tool of communication and for collating information. Adding an administrative function also helped with delivery and reducing the stress to the internal team at a time of low resources.

Reviews:

- **Rules:** it's felt some of the rules are unnecessary, confuse candidates and encourage frivolous complaints. A review is scheduled for April.
- **Dates:** the extended deadline for complaints after close of voting did not allow enough time for handling of serious sanctions such as disqualifications. These timeframes and approach will have to be reviewed for LE20.