

# Deputy President (Welfare) report to Scrutiny Committee

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## Updates:

- I have started a conversation with College's Human Resources department on staff-student disciplinary procedures, and have shared resources from my contact at Warwick. It seems that we share the same approach on our Personal Relationships Policies, which is more restrictive than what the Office for Students currently plans on recommending (see Proposal F [here](#) as compared to Imperial's Personal Relationships Policy [here](#)). It seems that the main limit to timescales is due to a lack of casework resource in Registry, which will hopefully soon be rectified as a result of the Student Disciplinary Procedures Review outcome (see more in the Objectives section below).

## Upcoming:

- Collating quantitative data for the Housing Review (Phase 1).
- Second draft of the College's Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
- Starting a conversation with HR on staff-student disciplinary procedures.
- Analysing the results of the technology accessibility survey and sharing the results with faculties and Library Services.
- Identifying gaps in resource for students in need of free/reduced meals.
- I will be attending the Russel Group Student Union residential at Nottingham SU in the second week of May.
- Analysing the results of focus groups for the CSP culture review, and formulating an action plan with facilitators.
- I will be rolling out a 2023 version of ICUsToo's [sexual misconduct survey](#) in Term 3.
- I will be attending a student roundtable on the Office for Students' proposed condition of registration, [E6. Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#), which will aim to hold universities to account to implement procedures to identify and address incidences of harassment towards people with protected characteristics, and sexual misconduct, under threat of financial sanction. This will be taking place on Wednesday, 26 April at 13:30 - let me know if you would also like to attend!

- Submission to the OfS consultation on condition of registration E6 is due on 5 May - I am working with ICUsToo and Student Services to produce this.

## Community & Welfare Forum Updates:

- On 24/01/2023, we met to discuss the topic of Mental Health. Anthea (RCSU VP - Welfare) gave a presentation on her research on issues surrounding mitigating circumstances - it was highlighted that problems arise when students facing chronic conditions have to submit the same evidence repeatedly, which can draw out processes for approval. I later communicated this to the Director of Academic Services, who incorporated this feedback directly into the new Academic Services Strategy. I also held a Mentimeter discussion on the College's Mental Health Strategy, which showed support for developing better links into NHS services, along with improving access to existing services.
- On 23/03/2023, we met to discuss the topic of housing (both private and College-owned). Our Policy & Research Officer held a focus group in which we had over 10 students and an even split between undergraduates and postgraduates. Prominent issues were identified in being able to access suitable housing that is close to campus, with some students having to live over an hour away from their main campus in order to afford rent. Financially disadvantaged students have a hard time affording deposits, as the College's rent guarantor scheme is often rejected by landlords. Students have cited having to make compromises on the quality of housing, and have to deal with ongoing issues around poor maintenance and loud works which affect their quality of life and ability to work at home. Accessibility in high-rise buildings is a concern, with one student claiming that fire lifts were out of order for long periods of time, leaving students with mobility impairments without any alternatives to evacuate in case of emergencies.

We also discussed the Halls Policy and Religious Observance Policies, both of which are up for review and will be brought to Council to renew.

## Objectives:

### Objective 1: Cost of Living - [In progress]

I have created an action tracker of my remaining actions for the year which can be viewed [here](#); it is currently being updated on a weekly basis.

I have collated all of the research that has been done this academic year on cost of living and submitted it to Paul Blomfield MP's inquiry into cost of living for the All Party Parliamentary Group for Students. The results from the inquiry have now been published and can be read [here](#)

The Russell Group Student Unions' survey on cost of living has now closed, with Imperial producing 1513 responses, second only to UCL (2243 responses), who hosted the survey. I

am now in the process of trying to get the data in Excel/CSV form so that I can analyse the results.

Jordan (Working Class Officer) and I had been working on a scheme to roll out free meals through the College catering outlets, as an alternative to Food for All (a charity which gives out 500 free meals a day). We decided to pursue this alternative due to concerns around consistency and reliability, as observed in other institutions - we were concerned that the lack of consistency in resource would create a risk for vulnerable students that decide to rely on this provision and travel to campus without prepacked meals, only to not have this provision available on certain unforeseeable days. However, the College has now informed us that they are resistant to providing free meals through catering outlets, as they are not convinced that it would be fulfilling a need that is not being met through other means. The closest comparable provision that is currently available to students is the provision of Tesco £100 vouchers that is available for applicants to the Student Support Fund to access whilst they are awaiting the results of their application - I am investigating the nuances around this provision to identify any gaps that may arise, which our proposed scheme could seek to address.

Jordan (Working Class Officer) and I rolled out a technology accessibility survey through reps which received 50 responses. Jordan is working on a summary report which will be given to faculties and the Library Services explaining how best to target resources to where they are currently lacking.

## Objective 2: Student Disciplinary Procedures Review [Complete]

Done.

Hayley, Jason and I have succeeded in acquiring the following provisions in the new procedures:

- The reporting party will be notified of the outcome, sanctions, and the panel's reasoning for said outcome and sanctions.
- Both the reporting party and responding party will have the option to appeal on the grounds of procedures not being followed, inappropriate sanctions being given, or new evidence that was not previously available.
- A safeguarding process for reports of sexual violence is being implemented.
- Additional resource will be provided in Registry (including more caseworkers and a case management system) to shorten timescales and have better tracking on cases.
- We did not establish a single point of contact, or identify a "College advocate", as we wanted students to have the agency to decide who would be best placed to support them - they do have the right to bring representation to panel hearings, and in some cases this may include legal representation. Whilst there is not the explicit mention of having the same provision for reporting parties, I am working with Registry and Student Services to propose that some form of legal aid be given to survivors (such as an ISVA), who may be permitted to attend hearings. Ideally, the same sort of provision would also be offered to responding students as well.

- Anonymous reports can now be used to initiate investigations, and in some cases they may also be used as evidence (e.g. when an online post that breaches the Code of Conduct is found publicly available on social media).
- Reporting parties are now allowed to attend panel hearings if they wish - accommodations will be made to ensure that they are as comfortable as possible (e.g. dialling in through video link, use of dividing screens). If the panel determines that misconduct has occurred, then they will be invited to share an Impact Statement with the panel ahead of the deliberation of the appropriate sanction.
- A penalty matrix has been drafted to determine appropriate sanctions.
- College and the Union now share a Code of Conduct.

I will soon be meeting with members of the working group to identify what additional resource is needed to action the outcomes of this review most effectively.

### **Objective 3: Imperial College Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy - [In progress]**

Student consultation has been completed for the strategy, and a green paper has been produced. Aglaia and I are both on the steering group and are working on a heartfelt written introduction that will be addressed directly from the both of us.

Aglaia is also doing a study on student perspectives on the use of data analytics to implement preventative wellbeing measures - have a chat with her if you would like to find out more (or if you would like to volunteer to be a part of the study!)

### **Objective 4: Clubs, Societies and Projects Culture Review - [In progress]**

Our focus groups have been completed. Over the next two weeks we will be working on cleaning up the transcripts - analysis and workshopping with senior volunteers will follow in the first two weeks of May.

### **Objective 5: EDI Strategy - [In progress]**

We have succeeded in hiring a student to analyse the EDI data. Their work will commence next week, and we should have a clearer scope of timelines then. My ballpark figure for the number of work hours required is roughly 50 hours over the course of a month.

I am also working to follow up with the Education Office to see if we can map our data to gender and ethnicity, as these are currently missing.

## **Objective 6: Student Housing Review - [In progress]**

The Student Experience Survey (SES) results have now been [published](#) - this will be the main source of quantitative data. I am also working on expanding the College's guarantor scheme to include postgraduate students, and will use the SES data to assess potential demand and resource required.