

Student Experience Survey Response

2014



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Introduction

The Student Experience Survey seeks to understand students' opinions on life at Imperial beyond lecture theatres or labs. This report considers the findings of the survey, making recommendations where applicable. This is also a valuable opportunity for Imperial College Union to commend services which are working well and celebrate their successes.



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These results can form a framework to improve the student experience at Imperial College London

This year the survey ran from December 2013 – January 2014 with an overall response rate of around 20%. All students were able to take part in this survey (with the exception of final year Undergraduate students*). Of those students who completed the survey 49% were Undergraduates, 28% were Postgraduates (Taught) and 23% Postgraduates (Research).

Our hope is that these results can form a framework to improve the student experience at Imperial College London. Both Imperial College Union and Imperial College London are committed to ensuring these recommendations are acted upon.

* As final year Undergraduate students are expected to complete the National Student Survey (NSS) it was felt these students should not be required to submit another comprehensive survey in the same academic year.

For a digital copy of this report and accompanying information go online to

imperialcollegeunion.org/ses2014



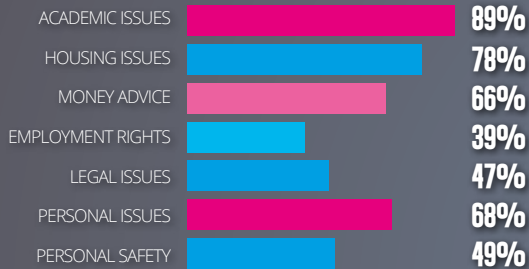
All information correct at the time of going to print March 2014.

Health & Wellbeing

The College and the Union provide and outsource a number of services to assist with student's health and wellbeing. The Advice Centre, Conselling Service, Health Centre, Personal Safety, Students with Disabilities and Faith are all considered here.

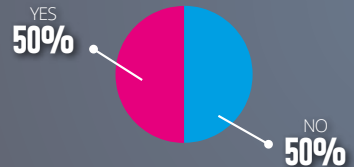
ADVICE CENTRE

Are you aware that the Advice Centre offers support with the following issues?



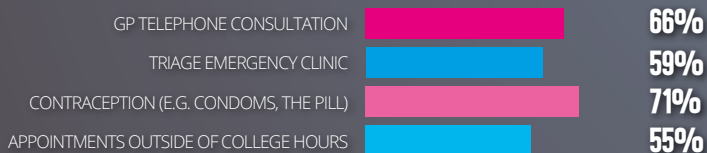
COUNSELLING SERVICE

Are you aware that Imperial has a Counselling Service (located in the Sherfield Building)?



HEALTH CENTRE

Are you aware that the Health Centre offers the following services?



PERSONAL SAFETY

Generally I feel safe in...

AREA	DEFINITELY AGREE	MOSTLY AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	MOSTLY DISAGREE	DEFINITELY DISAGREE
My main Campus during the day	1,581	215	9	11	12
The immediate surrounding area during the day	1,450	317	27	16	11
My main Campus during the evening	1,262	465	58	20	16
The immediate surrounding area during the evening	1,024	570	150	55	24

FAITH

Are you aware the Chaplaincy provides the following services?



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Are you aware that the Disability Advisory Service can help with:



Union Advice Centre

The Union's Advice Centre is located within Imperial College Union and provides advice and support for all students on a number of different topics from employment rights to housing concerns.

58% of respondents were aware that Imperial College Union has an Advice Centre. A number of students assumed the Advice Centre was part of the Student Hub run by College whilst others were unaware that it was run by professionally trained staff and that it offered a private, confidential space to discuss issues. Increased advertising of the Advice Centre is clearly needed both to raise awareness of its existence, and to clarify the services it offers. Of those respondents who had used the Advice Centre the majority (74%) were satisfied with the support they had received

and very few expressed dissatisfaction. This is clearly a positive result although there is room for improvement. A number of students felt that their concerns had slipped through the net, or would have liked to have had some follow-up contact following initial interaction with the centre.

Whilst the majority of students were aware that the Advice Centre could offer support for Academic, Housing, Money and Personal issues, fewer students knew about the Advice Centre's support for employment rights, legal issues and personal safety. Again publicity of these services would be very beneficial.



I did not know about this before this survey and still don't know where it is/how to use it, so perhaps it might be a good idea for the advice centre to publicize itself to first years a bit more.



I have never needed to use it but if I need advice in the future I would probably go to the advice centre.



Very supportive during the summer when my support was delayed from Student Finance England (SFE). They put in place emergency measures to help me until my money arrived and pushed SFE to get the application sorted.



Is this the student hub?

Recommendations

For the Union to build an even greater awareness of the services the Advice Centre can provide to students

For the Union to develop new systems to ensure students' concerns are followed up, and contact is made.

Counselling Service

The Counselling Service offers short-term, free of charge counselling to all students. Counsellors are available at the South Kensington, Hammersmith and Silwood Park Campuses. The service is offered by fully trained professionals who also organise a number of events and workshops during the year.

Just 50% of respondents were aware of the Counselling Service at Imperial – a figure which is far too low in the opinion of the Union. Similarly many students based at Silwood were unaware that they could access the counselling services at Silwood Park rather than travelling to South Kensington. The availability of the Counselling Service and provisions at campuses other than South Kensington needs to be promoted to all students. This lack of communication may go some way to explaining why so few students are aware of the service. Students who would have liked to have accessed counselling but did not were commonly unsure what the Counselling Service dealt with, how to get an appointment or preferred to use the counselling offered by the Health Centre at Imperial. The Counselling Service must ensure students know how to access the service, and what issues can be accommodated.

Of those who have used the Counselling Service, 77% agreed or mostly agreed they were satisfied with the support they had received. These positive findings show that by far the majority of students have had a positive experience when using the Counselling Service.

The majority (42%) of respondents who had used the service received an initial appointment within one to four days, with very few waiting more than 14 days. Similarly encouraging, the majority (71%) of respondents felt that the amount of counselling they received was adequate.

However, 27% felt that it was insufficient. Student's comments show that for serious or long-term issues the current limit on the number of sessions imposed upon them is a source of frustration, prompting some to seek alternative sources of counselling, either with the Health Centre or privately. There is clearly room for improvement.



I used the service based at Silwood rather than South Ken. It was useful to have this available on campus. I would not have gone to counselling if it meant travelling to South Ken.



Extremely satisfied. I couldn't get over my hard period without the service. (I have used twice.)



We are only allowed 7 or 9 weeks of counselling for the whole year. I reached the limit and had to stop while I was dealing some pretty serious problems in my life.



I don't know where the counselling service is located and I am not clear how to book an appointment with them. This information should be clear for students who need to talk to a counsellor.

Recommendations

For the College to provide increased advertisement of the Counselling Service – including how to access the service.

For the Union and College to ensure students at Silwood Park and Hammersmith know they can access the Counselling Service at these campuses.

Health Centre

Imperial College Health Centre (ICHC) offers a GP surgery, nurse services, counselling, preventative workshops, a travel clinic and more for Imperial College London students based at a number of campuses.

The two most common concerns of respondents throughout the survey were the attitudes of reception staff, and the length of time it took to get an appointment. In light of previous issues with reception staff reported within last year's survey, respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the customer service they had received at reception. Just 16% reported receiving less than satisfactory customer service, suggesting an improvement upon the previous year. However reception staff were reported by many students as being rude, indiscrete and at times chaotic. A number of students reported feeling distressed by staff during their visit to ICHC at a time when they already felt vulnerable.

In terms of appointments, 23% of respondents were able to see a healthcare practitioner the same day showing that ICHC appears to be dealing with urgent care well. A further 29% of students were able to see a practitioner within seven days. Many students were dissatisfied at waiting two weeks or longer for an appointment. Just 55% of respondents knew that ICHC had appointments available outside of College hours.

A lack of appointment availability combined with inconvenient appointment times has potentially resulted in students using walk-in services at other healthcare providers, or using hospital services instead. This is clearly not ideal and efforts should be made where possible to ensure more students are able to access appointments at a time convenient to them.

Many students expressed frustration that they were unable to register with the centre mostly because of the area they live in. In March 2013 ICHC removed its services to Postgraduate students living outside its catchment area – a decision which was subsequently reversed in August 2013 as a result of pressure from Imperial College Union and the College. Although only students living in the catchment area are able to register with ICHC all students (regardless of where they live) are able to access ICHC's services. 63% of the respondents indicated they were registered with the ICHC.

A significant number of Postgraduate students are not aware that they can now access ICHC's services, regardless of whether they live in the catchment area or not. The reversal of circumstances needs to be publicised better amongst Postgraduate students to ensure they are able take advantage of services made available to them.

Recommendations

For the Union and College to increase publicity amongst Postgraduate students that they are able to use the Health Centre regardless of where they live.

Undergraduate students who live outside of the catchment area (predominately second, third and fourth year students) also expressed dissatisfaction that they were unable to register with ICHC. As an institution in which most students have a high number of contact-hours, having medical support available on campus should be prioritised.

Once students attended an appointment, on the whole feedback about the healthcare practitioners was positive. Many students reported that they had received a good level of service – particularly from the General Practitioners.



When you want to make an appointment the next available one will be in 3/4 weeks on average. By that time most problems are no longer relevant or help will have had to be sought from elsewhere.



PhD students, who tend to spend far longer times every day on campus, should be allowed to register in the Imperial College Health Centre despite not living in its catchment area.



The receptionist was unhelpful and downright rude, speaking loudly when I asked about a personal problem, and making a sarcastic comment in response to a question to which I didn't know the answer.



I have previously used it and thought the GP was fantastic.

Personal Safety

94% of students said they felt safe in their residential area which is a positive result; however from some of the text comments it was clear that some students did not feel safe especially at night away from campus. From the free text comments it is clear that respondents felt that bike theft is an issue that needs to be addressed on campus, despite the continued efforts of College Security in this area. Respondents also appear concerned for their possessions on campus.



I have concerns regarding my personal safety in East Acton, above all in the evening. As I leave late, I generally wait for the bus in front of the main entrance of the hospital, and get to the nearest tube station.



Walking at night very unsafe due to lack of street-lights and fast drivers.

Recommendations

For the Union to create a personal safety campaign raising awareness of safety concerns.



Insufficient security for bikes.



The road behind the prison leading to east Acton tube station is poorly lit and there have been incidences of muggings etc.

Faith

The Chaplaincy and Multi-Faith Centre remains an under-utilised service amongst Imperial students, with only 3% of students reporting having used the service. It seems that part of the problem is a lack of awareness about the services provided, with 73% of respondents not aware that the Chaplaincy provided advice and guidance, interfaith events, meditation spaces or workshops.

The students who used the Chaplaincy rated it positively, with 69% of students saying they were satisfied with the service and only 2% reporting dissatisfaction.

The free text comments also highlighted some misconceptions about the chaplaincy, with many respondents who identified as atheist stating they would have no need for the space or students questioning why a chaplaincy would be needed at a science university. Other comments reiterated a lack of awareness of the service or questioning where it was – this may be due to the recent move of the Chaplaincy from the East Basement in Beit to Prince's Gardens. Respondents did appreciate the provision of meditation spaces and many said they would have utilised them if they had been aware of them.



Make these services more available to students by making them known on the website, and how to register, where they're located, what they do, etc.

Recommendations

For the College to increase promotion of Chaplaincy facilities among students.

For the College to ensure the Chaplaincy to continue provide mindfulness and meditation sessions.



I didn't know anything about it or even where it is?



Such a nice place so peaceful.



I have only used the meditation courses and they have been excellent

Students with Disabilities

In the survey the definition of a disability was given and respondents asked whether they considered themselves to have a disability based on the definition. 7% responded that they did, while 5% responded that they were unsure.

Of the respondents who considered themselves to have a disability, 37% indicated they had not declared their disability to either the Disability Advisory Service or to their Department.

Awareness of the services which the Disability Advisory Service offers varied considerably from 82% of respondents aware of confidential advice and support, to 55% awareness of longer library loans and 55% arranging study skills tutorials and study mentoring.

Of the respondents who had used the Disability Advisory Service, 82% agreed that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the support offered by the service. This is a gratifying result and commends the excellent work done by the service in recent years.



I am actually a bit disappointed, everything takes ages and there was also no communication before I started here, in comparison to that other universities contacted me even before they gave me an offer and tried to put everything in place before I confirmed my place and wanted to visit me at school. Also it seems like the Disability Advisory Service is on the side of the college and does not try to liaise the student's opinion. I really appreciate your help, but in comparison with the support I received at school and the support I receive from my DLO there was only little help from you. I understand that you might be very busy, but then I would like the college to consider employing more staff.

Recommendations

For the Union to continue to work with the College to increase awareness of the definition of disability and increase the promotion of the Disability Advisory Service.



I declared my disability when I applied to the university and my department, but received no response or questions relating to my disability. I used to receive mentoring at my undergraduate institution, but this hasn't continued at Imperial.



They made me feel very comfortable. I was extremely impressed and would recommend the service to any other student.



When I decided to declare my dyslexia, the team were incredibly helpful and arranged extra time for my re-sit exams very quickly and efficiently (this was helped by effective communication with the department who were also very supportive). They are informative, accessible and very each to approach.

Money & Housing

Financial and accommodation worries are often reported by students due to Imperial's locations in some of London's most expensive boroughs. Accommodation has been particularly topical in recent years due to changes in the accommodation portfolio, which have led to new builds and the closing of old halls, and the College's Residential Experience Review. The Union's submission to this review can be read online at imperialcollegeunion.org/rer.

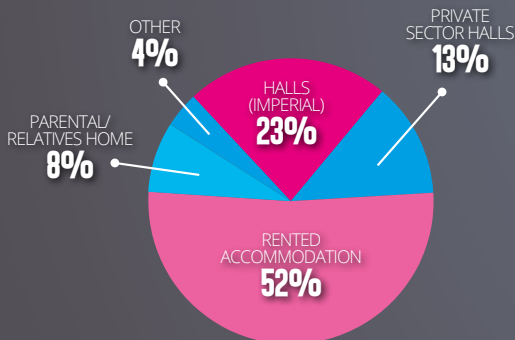
FINANCE AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Are you aware of the financial support from Imperial College and if so how have you found out about it?

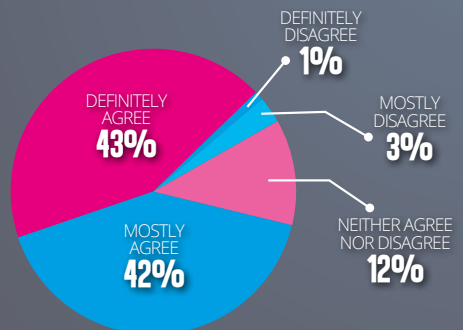


ACCOMMODATION

What type of accommodation are you currently staying in?



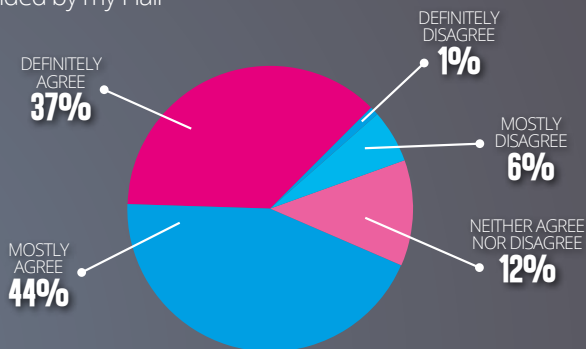
I am satisfied with the support provided by the wardening team of my Halls of Residence.



This year we asked students about where they were living, how they were funding their studies, and how that was affecting their time at Imperial.

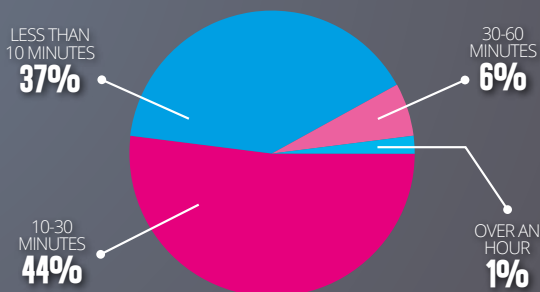
HALLS

I am satisfied with the social opportunities provided by my Hall



COMMUTING

On average, how long is your commute to your main Imperial campus?



Finances and Financial Support

Imperial offers students a range of options for financial support, from a competitive bursary scheme to emergency funds such as the Access to Learning fund. 18% of respondents reported receiving some form of financial support from Imperial College.

Last year's survey uncovered confusion amongst students about which funds they could access and were entitled to. College has since implemented a searchable database of scholarships and bursaries to allow students easier access to these funds. However 39% of respondents say they are still unaware of the financial support provided by the College, suggesting more needs to be done to promote these services. Only 40% of respondents stated applying for financial support outside of their department or the Student Financial Support office was easy to do.

When asked how students were funding their living costs at university, 62% of respondents said they accessed support from their families. This varied widely by programme type, with only 17% of PGR respondents reporting this, compared with 61% of PGT respondents and 47% of UGs, reflecting the different funding models of these courses.

For the first time this year, students were asked how much of a factor the availability of financial support was in choosing Imperial as a university – only 23% of students stated it had no impact on their decision compared with 61% of students who stated the availability of financial support was either the determining or an influencing factor on their decision.

When asked where they would go if they found themselves in financial difficulty, respondents stated they would go to Student Financial Support, their personal tutor or the Union's Advice Centre as a first port of call. It is important therefore that personal tutors know where to direct students who have financial difficulty to and how best to support them in light of the impact this could have on their studies.

Concerns around the College's Credit Control team were raised in last year's survey so a question was introduced to probe this further. Although 71% of respondents were satisfied at how outstanding payments to College were handled, 20% of students were dissatisfied, suggesting there may be variability in the service.



I would not have been able to afford life at imperial without the financial support I have been given, coming from a low income background.



PhD supervisor made application of the departmental scholarship easy to understand and apply for.



[Imperial College credit control] emailed me repeatedly asking for me to pay my fees, despite having been told by my department on several occasions that I was on a PhD funded by BBSRC, who had already paid my fees.



Very patient and understood that I was doing all I could to resolve the situation which was not of my making.

Recommendations

For College to ensure personal tutors know where to signpost students experiencing financial difficulties.

For College and the Union to improve the way additional funding available to students is publicised, highlighting how and where to access financial advice and support.

Accommodation

Just over half (52%) of the survey respondents indicated they live in privately rented accommodation, compared to 23% living in undergraduate halls and 13% living in private halls such as GradPad.

The College operates a portfolio of residences in a number of locations around West London, and guarantees an offer of accommodation to all first-year undergraduates. As identified in last year's response, Halls of Residence are crucial to fostering a welcoming and safe student community, with their effects lasting throughout a student's time at Imperial.

There are a number of dimensions to the role that Halls of Residence play in supporting students. Physical aspects such as their location and build quality affect how much they benefit or hinder students in developing a social life and taking part in College's community. Their affordability is also an important factor for students; the existence of shared rooms and 'older', cheaper residences such as Evelyn Gardens are fundamental to ensuring access to the sciences for students from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Intangible aspects such as their atmosphere, openness and the vibrancy of the student-led activities within the hall are also important to students. Most respondents were pleased with the social opportunities offered by their hall of residence, with 81% saying they were

satisfied with the events provided and only 5% of students not attending any event offered by their hall. This seems to be an improvement on last year, where only 76% rated hall social activities as good or very good. This chimes with the information the Union presented in its submission to the College's review of the residential experience in February 2014. Free text comments regularly describe how hall events are popular, and how the wardening and senior team have helped create a sense of Hall spirit and community. The fusion of social and pastoral provision within Hall Wardening teams should be maintained.

One factor which tended to influence the satisfaction with halls of residence was the length of the commute into a student's main campus, with just over half of respondents reporting that the length of their commute affected their participation in Union social opportunities. 22% of respondents reported that the length of their commute discouraged them from participating in Union activities, despite only 8% reporting a commute of over 30 minutes.

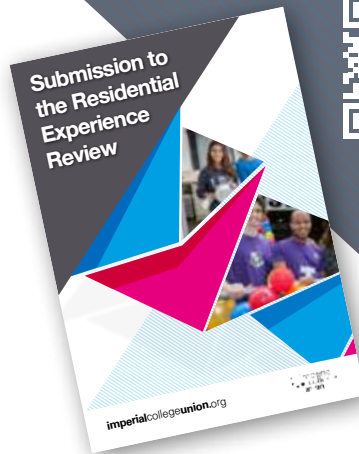
Similar to previous surveys, wardens were rated highly amongst respondents who lived in a hall of residence, with 85% reporting satisfaction with the support provided. Last year, 81% of students rated welfare support in hall as either good or very good.

Residential Experience Review

Given the breadth and number of recommendations the Union made in its response to the College's review of the residential experience we have not made additional recommendations at this point.

For a digital copy of this report and accompanying information go online to

imperialcollegeunion.org/rer



The hall wardens and sub-wardens are approachable and friendly.



My halls of residence provides all the welfare support I need and has given me the opportunity to get involved with the hall committee as well as joining the events to have fun.



There are very few hall events that involve all the residents of Linstead, so opportunities to meet other residents are limited.



The wardening system is fantastic and should be continued indefinitely. It is hugely helpful to feel part of the family "vertically" at Imperial (i.e. across age ranges) and not just horizontally (as a year)



I really love living in halls and really appreciate all the work the wardens, sub-wardens and seniors put in to making the year great!



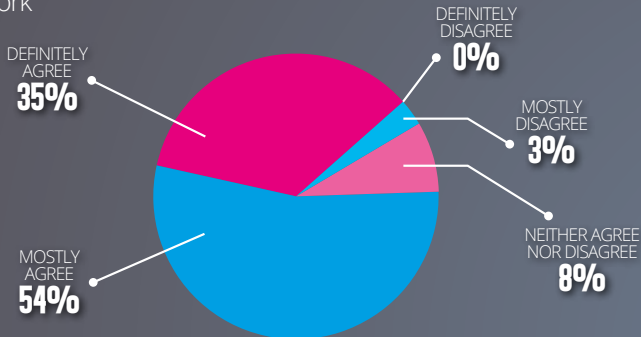
Journey from imperial to hall is too long and therefore restricts my participation in clubs and societies. This is very annoying.

Academic Support

Supporting students throughout their studies is an essential and critical service. Each student's academic support needs differ so a wide range of support options are needed. We asked students about their contact with personal tutors or supervisors, as well as their awareness of the other support services available to them. Students need to feel their views are represented and that their voice is heard by the College. The Academic Representative Network is there for this purpose, and so we asked students about their understanding of the network and their representatives.

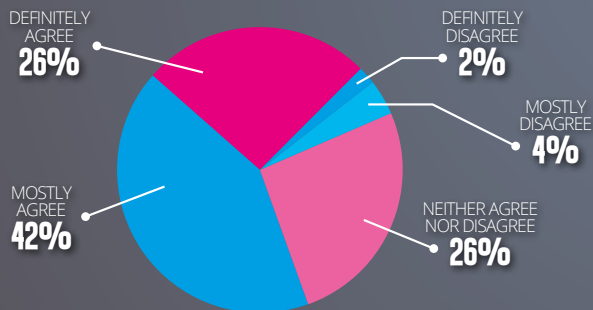
INDUCTION

As part of my induction, my department helped me understand how my programme of study would work



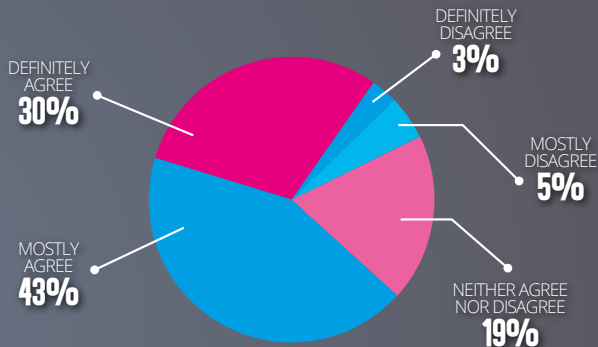
ACADEMIC REPS

I am satisfied with the student representation system for my department



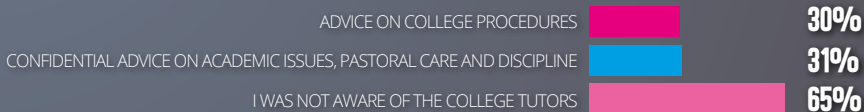
TUTORS/SUPERVISORS

I am satisfied that staff within my department are interested in my well being



COLLEGE TUTORS

Are you aware that the University has College Tutors who can help in these circumstances



Induction of New Students

First impressions are extremely important, and whether students feel welcome at the start of their Imperial journey will influence their opinions and feelings for the entirety of their time here. This is not only important for first year undergraduates, but Masters and PhD students coming to Imperial for the first time.

92% of respondents were satisfied with their induction to the College and their specific department, with only 3% feeling that their department neglected to help them understand how their programme of study would work. Student's comments suggest they would like extended office hours during the first few weeks to help them settle in and answer any questions they have, as well as a tour of their departments and the campus so they get to know their way around.

Some students also feel the structure of the course and assessments were not properly explained until later on in the year and would have liked this sooner.

Recommendations

For the College to produce standard guidelines for the induction of new students



The department made me feel very welcome.



Very disjointed and not reassuring. Especially at [Charing Cross] it was very lonely and made me want to drop out.



Not enough introduction and explanation to the details of assessed assignments as well as some ambiguity in grading.



Poor organisation when I first arrived - almost no information given to me, I had to find everything out myself and when I asked members of staff/volunteers/advice service I got referred to the wrong departments and no one ever got back to me.

Academic Representation

Every student at Imperial has an Academic Representative whether they are studying for an Undergraduate course, Masters or a PhD. This year the Union introduced the “Who’s my rep” function on the Union website, so once logged-in all students’ Academic Reps are identified for them. The statistics show that this and the Academic Rep A-to-Z are becoming effective. 91% of Undergraduates knew who their Year Reps were and 89% of Masters students knew who their Course Reps were.

When it comes to more senior Academic Reps (i.e. those Academic Reps senior to Year, Course or Group Reps) however confusion begins. Amongst Postgraduate Research

students in particular there is confusion between Departmental Reps and Group Reps. Only 54% of students knew who their Departmental Rep was, although free text comments suggest that this figure may be higher as students get confused with different terminology. Similarly just 28% of Postgraduate students knew who their Academic and Welfare Officer (AWO) is, the student who represents them at Faculty level.

Despite this, only 6% of respondents were dissatisfied with the student representation in their department, indicating that our training and support of our Academic Representatives is working and all our student volunteers are doing a fantastic job.



The internal representation system is fantastic, though the connection to the centralised Union representation system is lacking greatly. I am a year rep and I have never met or been contacted by my AWO.



I have strong student representation through the CDT I belong to but not through my department.



I don't know who the reps are but am sure they would be fairly easy to access if I needed to.



The system itself works only if the year reps are active. If you're landed with poor year reps it's pretty hard to make a difference.

Recommendations

For the Union to increase awareness amongst students about Departmental Academic Representatives (UG & PG), Academic & Welfare Officers (PG), and Academic Affairs Officers (UG).

For the Union to investigate into changing the title of Academic Affairs Officers (UG) to Faculty Representatives.

Tutors & Supervision

Personal Tutors

Whether students need welfare advice, want to talk to a member of academic staff or just have a member of staff who knows their name, personal tutors provide an essential support service. They help students feel important, secure, and can also help with employment references.

There appears to be significant variation in the quality of personal tutors and supervisors although results have improved from last year's survey. 89% of Undergraduates see their personal tutor at least once a term. 79% are satisfied with their personal tutor's advice and support. Only 6% of students feel dissatisfied with the support given although worryingly there are still respondents to this survey who indicate they have never met with their personal tutor.

However, Postgraduates were slightly less satisfied with the support received from their tutors. 74% of Postgraduate respondents agreed that their department was interested in their well-being, with 10% of Postgraduate Research respondents and 6% of Postgraduate taught respondents disagreeing with this statement.

Supervision

PhD students who responded to the survey were mostly happy with the academic support provided by their supervisor, with a satisfaction rate of 81%. 77% of Taught Masters respondents were satisfied with the level of academic support given to them by their course organiser but only 64% of MRes respondents were satisfied. The implementation of "Starfish" (the online tutor logging system) should hopefully bring further improvements to the system and further improvements to student satisfaction.

College Tutors

66% of Undergraduate students and 57% of Postgraduate students were unaware of the College Tutors. There is clearly room for improvement in awareness here and increased publicity is needed. However of those students who were aware of College Tutors, 85% would feel comfortable approaching them.

Senior & Postgraduate Tutors

A concerning 21% of Undergraduate students did not know their department had a senior tutor and just 31% of Postgraduate students were aware that their department had a



My supervisor has been very supportive, i.e. encouraging me to do GTA courses.



College support - on both an academic and pastoral level it sucks.



Excellent supporting learning and teaching program.



If I could change one thing it'd be: "being 'forgotten' as a part time student and lacking support!

Recommendations

For the College to introduce centralised training, support and advice for all personal tutors about their role.

For the College and Union to increase awareness about alternative methods of support available to students unhappy with their supervisor or personal tutor.

For the College to increase promotion of the support available to students from departments, faculties and at a College level.

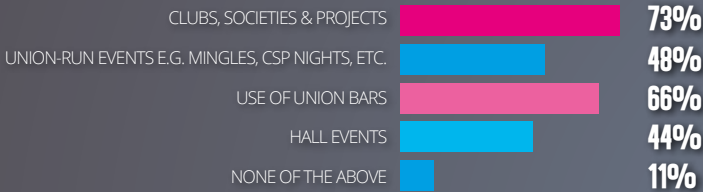
For the Union to lobby college to formalize the approach to tutoring, communicating with students the tutoring standard they should expect.

Social Life & Commu

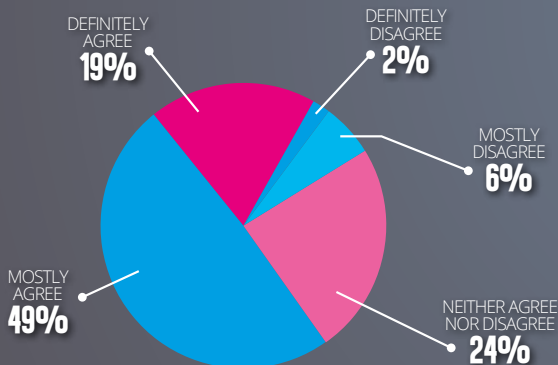
Students' social life and the sense of community they experience whilst at Imperial have a significant influence overall on their perception of the Union and of the College. It is important that social opportunities run by the Union are open and welcoming for all students from all backgrounds. Whether an Undergraduate or Postgraduate student, based at the South Kensington campus or not, all students should feel their social needs are catered for.

UNION SOCIAL LIFE

Which of the following social opportunities have you used during your time at Imperial?



I am satisfied with the social opportunities offered by the Union



Unity

This chapter will consider Halls, Union's social opportunities, International Student Support & English Language Support Unit, Mums and Dad's scheme and the Student Experience overall.

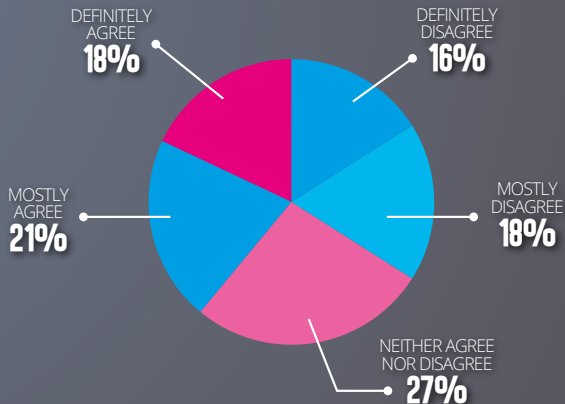
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT

Which services are you aware the International Student Support team provides?



MUMS & DADS

I have found the 'Mums and Dads' scheme to be helpful



Union's Social Opportunities

Imperial College Union runs a vast range of events, activities and services, which gives members access to a whole host of social activities. These range from our social enterprises (FiveSixEight, the Union Bar, Metric, h-Bar and Reynolds), events such as Mingles, termly Carnivals and weekly club nights, Hall events, through to our 300+ Clubs, Societies or Projects, events such as Give-it-a-go, the New Years Fair and the Community Connections Scheme.

Just under two-thirds of respondents (73%) have used the Union's Clubs, Societies & Projects, 48% have attended Union led events and 44% have participated in social opportunities coordinated by their Hall. Two-thirds of respondents use the Union's bars as a social opportunity. In 2013/14, 11% did not get involved in Union social opportunities compared to 30% in the 2012/13 survey. 68% of members either definitely or mostly agreed with the statement 'I am satisfied with the social opportunities offered by the Union' and just 8% mostly or definitely disagreed. The majority of free text comments focused on the need to increase the number of non-alcohol related events and activities. In 2013/14 the Union delivered the Alt. Mingle, an alcohol-free

event during Welcome Week – an event which was well attended.

The percentage of students accessing social activities run by the Union varies significantly between campuses, with a particular divide between the South Kensington campus and others. 35% of Royal Brompton respondents, 22% of Hammersmith, 18% St Mary's, 16% Chelsea and Westminster and 10% of Silwood respondents said they did not use the social opportunities listed. These statistics compare to just 3% of South Kensington based respondents.

Students based at these campuses also reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction than their South Kensington counterparts. Free text comments echoed frustration at the limited Union presence away from South Kensington. Clearly more work needs to be done to increase participation amongst these groups. Work in this area is planned, in March the Union published its first Campus Outreach Strategy which can be found online at imperialcollegeunion.org/news/student-community-every-campus.



The union should look into arranging alcohol-free events for those who choose not to drink.



Not enough options for students who are not based at South Kensington to get involved - need more activities on our own campuses



The Clubs/Societies seem to be some of the best run in the country, and the opportunities arising from this are of major benefit to IC/ICU



Indigo was the best metric night, hope it's back in the New Year!

Recommendations

For the Union to increase and better promote alcohol free events.

For the Union to publish online where Club, Society & Project activities take place and their proximity to non-South Kensington campuses.

For the Union to provide support to the Hammersmith Student Community to develop and expand, engage with students to establish a St Mary's Student Community and/or student led events.

International Student Support

The International Student Support (ISS) team provides immigration advice to students, specialising in Tier IV student visas and routes to working in the UK after study. They have also begun to offer a wider range of services for international students, such as trips, orientation workshops and events throughout the year.

The ISS is very well regarded by its users, with a strong satisfaction rating and a high awareness rate amongst students of the

services it provides. 24% of respondents had used the services provided by the International Student Support Team, of these 92% of students were satisfied with the service provided.

From the free-text comments, respondents indicate that a wider range of events and trips would be welcomed.



My sense is that the ISS is focussed very specifically on undergraduates and on a limited range of service provision. At US universities the international office acts as a central community focus for international students helping to orient them and ensure that their time at university is productive and well integrated.



The international student workshops were great and really helpful to get used to living in Imperial. I think, that also home students would profit from a similar introduction.



They helped me a lot in getting a visa and in settling in London. I would rate them as the best support team at Imperial College. they were quick in replying to my emails and they answered every question I asked them. Keep up the good work.

Recommendations

For the International Student Support team be supported in expanding its range of events, trips, socials and orientation events for international students, cooperating with international Clubs, Societies & Projects as well as the Union's wider programmes.

English Language Support Unit

The English Language Support Unit (ELSU) provides group and one-to-one support to staff and students of College who do not speak English as their first language. This is achieved through classes, clinics and seminars.

21% of the survey respondents indicated they have used the English Language Support Unit. These respondents reported a very high satisfaction rate, with 84% of respondents indicating they were satisfied with its services. The most common interactions respondents cite as having with the service appear to be English tests for incoming international students, and courses the ELSU offers throughout the year.

The most common criticism given by respondents is that popular sessions are over-subscribed, with students dissatisfied at the availability of courses such as Essay Writing at important periods.

Respondents offer a range of suggestions for the ELSU, such as weekend courses, extra sessions of fully-booked courses, and expanding their provision to the Business School. Broadly, the comments suggest that the ELSU is a well-regarded support service with high awareness amongst students and popular services; the comments are suggestions for future development rather than criticisms of the current service.



The support is adequate for those who have severe difficulties with the language. Unfortunately the support is not adequate for those with more than a basic understanding of English.



I tried to book a language clinic session last month but it was completely booked... I really need the support in academic writing



I know personally students who have been enrolled in the English support classes during their PhD course, especially in their first year. They have all agreed that the classes have helped them tremendously and the improvement in their spoken English (which was the main problem before) is noticeable. Keep up the good work!

Recommendations

For the College to review the provision of courses at peak periods, such as when a large group of PhD students are submitting their nine-month review.

Mums & Dad's Scheme

Mums & Dads is a scheme that assigns all first year undergraduate students with two 'parents'- students from older years in the same department. These 'parents' help students settle into the department and ensure that students feel welcome. Mums & Dads events should run throughout the year to keep these important contacts going, and to foster a friendly atmosphere in the department. Over 1,100 undergraduates were recruited as parents for the Mums & Dad's/Buddies scheme for the start of the 2013/14 academic year and all new undergraduates were allocated two buddies.

Only 53% of those respondents who had taken part in the scheme agreed it was useful, but 20% actively disagreed. Although students who had taken part in the buddy scheme had much to say, very few comments were complimentary. Many reported never meeting their buddy beyond a departmentally organised event in Welcome Week or at all. A number

of buddy events appear to have been closely connected with other social events which new students felt uncomfortable attending.

The scheme has potential to ensure students' transition into university life runs smoothly and opinions about the scheme will inevitably determine students' views about the institution from the quality of the support provided. Further research with participants (both the new students involved this year and those who volunteered for the scheme) is needed in order to address this and establish a future direction for the scheme.

Recommendations

For the Union to commission a review into the future format and delivery of the buddy scheme.



The buddy system is extremely ineffective, I have yet to see or hear from my "buddy" ever since the first lunch, and most of the advice I obtain regarding student life and all is from other seniors whom I get to know from clubs and societies.



Do not view it as a significant source of help - students can get better quality academic support from their tutors, and more immediate academic and personal support from peers in their year.



It involved a lot of drinking and partying, something which i don't really enjoy, and so, wouldn't want to be a part of.



I was allocated a medic mum 2 years above me but she was rubbish and didn't care about me.

Student Experience

The notion of the student experience draws together all elements of life at Imperial College Union around which this survey has been based – health & wellbeing, money & housing, academic support, social life and community.

83% of survey respondents definitely agreed or mostly agreed with the statement 'Overall, I am satisfied with my experience at Imperial College'. 11% neither agreed nor disagreed and just 5% mostly or definitely disagreed with the statement. Undergraduate and Postgraduate students reported very little difference in terms of satisfaction.

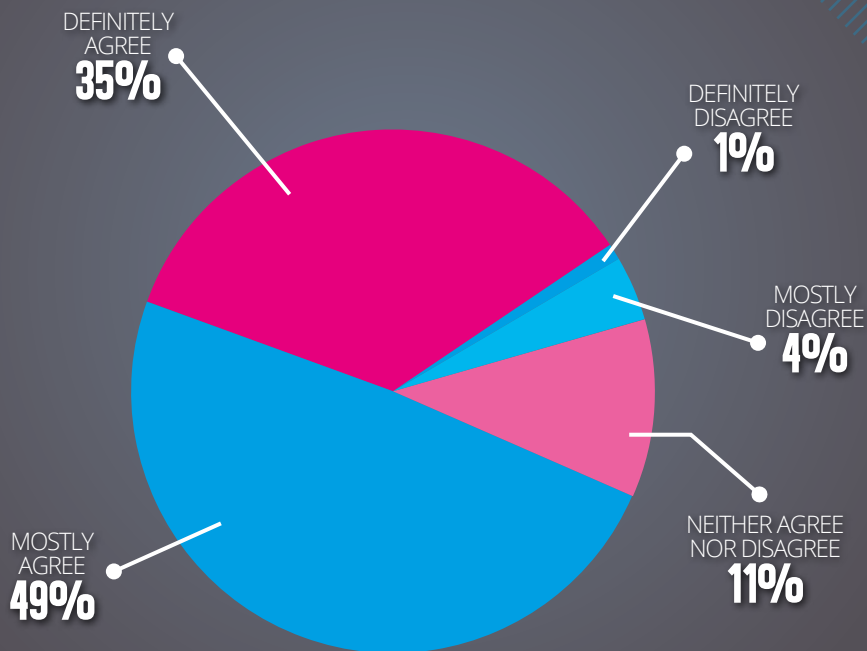
Imperial College London is a truly international community, an attribute of College that is regularly cited as one of the best features of the student experience along with the high quality of academic staff and the people students meet during their time at Imperial.

In comparison, comments relating to the worst features of the student experience revolve around finances – the cost of living, money worries, a lack of bursaries and financial support. Additional comments spoke about the difficulty in living far away from campus (commuting time, ability to participate in campus life) and the workload being higher than anticipated.

Three themes emerged in response to what can be done to improve the student experience: students would like to see more contact with personal tutors; more accommodation options closer to the main South Kensington Campus and students not based at South Kensington would also like more activities and opportunities to socialise.

Overall

Overall I am satisfied with my experience at Imperial College



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