

Council
9 June 2015

Felix Report for the academic year 2014-2015
Felix Editor: Philippa Skett

Overview

I have contributed to student media where appropriate throughout the year.

If you have the time, feel free to pursue the online editions of the 40+ pages of Felix issues I've produced each week.

Outline of the year

So far, I have overseen the production of:
27 issues, which equates to 1159 pages, which features 331 students printed in the centrefold.

Recruitment and engagement with the student community

Our membership currently stands at 128 members.

We average around 800 views a day on FelixOnline, although this increases on a Friday and during the weekends.

We have an editorial team consisting of around 30 students.

We distribute between 2,000 and 2,500 copies of the paper each week, across the South Kensington, Hammersmith, Charing Cross, St Mary's and Silwood campus.

Biggest stories of the year

Some of the stories we have ran this year have broken nationally and have been commended by academics, external journalists and other student organisations.

I would like to extend a big thanks to members of the Felix news team: Cecily Johnson, Carol Ann Cheah, Kunal Wagle and Philip Kent for their roles in the running of our news section.

Our biggest stories included:

Numerous club suspensions: ICURFC/ ICSMBC/ ICSM Rugby (see issues 1586, 1587, 1594)

We covered for all clubs their suspensions and any outcomes made public from investigations conducted by Imperial College Union or Imperial College London.

We also covered the petition for the ICURFC Club Captain to retain his position, and published statements in full from Tom Wheeler and the ICSM Rugby Captain when the ICSM team was suspended too. We also covered the financial issues one club was facing as a result of the suspension.

Before all stories were published, all students involved that we could identify and contact were offered 48 hours or more to provide a statement on the stories to provide their point of view.

I would like to officially thank Oliver Benton, ACC Chair and Dariush, ICSMSU President, for being mature, understanding and accommodating when covering such stories.

We are a newspaper, and as such, have a duty to cover all stories we consider newsworthy. Oliver and Dariush ensured that our coverage of the stories was as balanced as possible by liaising with the sports teams to secure quotes, both in the initial coverage and the follow up stories.

The suicide of Professor Stefan Grimm (Issue 1591)

Felix was the first to break the story ahead of several national news outlets, and was contacted by journalists from the Guardian in the week's following for subsequent coverage guidance.

We followed up the investigation led by College into the procedures around management and performance review of staff in issue 1603.

We received a lot of guidance in the coverage of this story from Imperial College Communications, which we were grateful for.

Survey reveals financial struggles of final year medics (Issue 1595)

This was brought to our attention by Jennie Watson, ICSMSU Welfare Officer, who conducted the survey. We analysed her results and also the raw data to draw our own conclusions about the topic, and the piece was shared widely online when it was published. It was shared and sampled by several other newspapers across London with their own medical schools.

I have also been told the total coverage has sparked debate about the topic by senior members of the Faculty of Medicine. Thanks go to Jennie for bringing the survey to our attention.

The closure of Weeks Hall (Issue 1598)

Our live tweeting of Union Council was the first time the residents of Weeks were informed of the proposed closure, and since then we worked closely with subwardens and the hall committee of Weeks hall to provide adequate coverage of the closure and the subsequent concerns those in the hall and students in general had about hall provisions.

I interviewed Debra Humphris, Vice Provost (Education) about the closure and we also ran comment pieces by those who lived in the hall about their views on the closure. I also attended several meetings conducted by the hall committee over the future of the hall and the ICaProblem campaign.

We also interviewed council members about their views on the closure of the hall, and included a guide to Union Council in case students were unsure about who Council are, how they are elected etc.

Misogyny at Imperial Varsity (Issue 1602)

Our coverage triggered a publicised investigation lead by College, which resulted in the College publically apologising to the Women's Rugby club, and also addressing other issues surrounding the sporting event.

As a result, the College has pledged to finance external academic research into sexism in sport, but will also be banning the selling of spirits at Varsity sites.

Nur Nordin, the student found with 30,000 images of pornography on his computer (1604)

Felix's coverage was mentioned in national media both in the UK and in Malaysia, the home country of the student in question.

However, College Communications deemed the front cover "inappropriate" and several distribution bins were removed from campus during the Imperial Festival as a result.

College Communications were informed that we were covering the story the Tuesday before we went to print, although they told us afterwards they did not anticipate we would put the story on the front page. We moved one bin within the library behind swipe card access, but papers placed in the library café, and bins from the business school, mech eng foyer, sherfield walkway and SAF were removed.

The distribution bins were returned to their locations the following Monday morning, and we met with College Communications after to discuss concerns over censorship.

The results of the Mentality Survey (Issue 1607)

Our coverage reached academics at Nottingham University, who have since got in touch with Imperial College Union to obtain the raw data to add to their own research on student stress and mental wellbeing.

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We would like to thank Bethany Davison for taking to the time to share her survey results and sit down and talk to us about the findings.

Other things we have been up to this year:

Issue 1600

This issue featured a 32 page Culture pullout, an 8 page science pullout, an election pullout and also an 8 page Hangman section amongst our other usual content. It totalled 96 pages.

I would like to thank Fred Fyles and Kamil McClelland, my esteemed Arts section editors, for the amazing work they did putting together Culture.

Workshops on defamation and news reporting

I ran these during Autumn and Spring term, and although both saw a modest turn out, we engaged with students who previously had not been involved with Felix and now write for the paper, which is positive.

Sex Survey

This had 600 responses, and the coverage was published in our last issue, which has proved popular online. Concerning comments about transgender students emerged from the survey responses, and we are hoping by publishing these and some responses from the transgender community we can start a broader dialogue about students who identify as transgender at Imperial and the issues they face.

The Big Election coverage

This year we conducted email interviews with all candidates for the Officer Trustee positions, and with the Felix editor candidate too. We also published online any comment pieces by supporters of candidates. All candidates were given the same opportunity to arrange the commissioning and publication of such comment pieces, and all pieces were given the same online publicity via social media.

All pieces featured links to the union voting page, and also a link to our own General Election exit poll, which received around 150 responses.

Our Big Election coverage and exit poll is something we can build on for next year, which hopefully will engage more students with the Big Elections too.

General Election coverage

We printed a guide to the GE2015 ahead of voting in Issue 1603 which included a breakdown of the candidate MPs in the local areas around Imperial, reviews of the television debates, local topics that MPs have given their views on and a guide to voting in general.

We also included coverage of the Union's lobbying of MP's concerning their stance on Higher Education Funding, alongside a breakdown of local constituencies and the issues they face.

We published our own General Election opinion poll in Issue 1605 which proved popular. We advertised the poll online for only a week, but still received responses from just under 200 students.

Our coverage of the results included an interview with local Hammersmith MP Andy Slaughter, and we are in the process of arranging one with Greg Hands, MP for Chelsea and Fulham constituency. We have also ran several interviews with Imperial graduates who were MPs, and other candidates in the local area who were running for a seat in the House of Commons in the lead up to the election.

Mental Health coverage and the expansion of our Welfare Section

Big thanks go out to George Butcher who provided a detailed feature on the mental health stigma at Imperial and the provisions available to students. The feature was printed at the end of last term and received positive feedback from students who I've spoken to about the content.

We have also significantly increased the output and quality of our Welfare section this year, with pages devoted to wellbeing each week, covering topics such as depression, anxiety, homesickness, long-distance relationships, eating disorders, revision schedules, gender and sexuality.

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Every week we also have published a list of contact numbers that students can use for welfare issues.

A big thanks goes to my Welfare editors, Diba Esbati and Chanon Wongsatayanont.

Felix Online redesign and improvement

Overseen by Philip Kent, the website was redesigned at the beginning of the year and has been improved month on month after feedback from users and members of our team. We also relaunched our app, designed by Kunal Wagle. Thanks go to both for their involvement.

Phoenix

We relaunched the arts magazine, Phoenix, this year, with two 24 page issues printed within end of term issues. We have a separate stand alone magazine planned for this term too. We are covering the printing costs of the stand alone magazine using leftover funds from the budget allocated to printing the weekly issues of Felix.

A big thanks again goes to Fred Fyles and Kamil McClelland for running Phoenix, along with Matt Allinson who was involved with the first issue. Engagement with the magazine has been impressive and there has often been an excess of material submitted for inclusion of each issue.

I, Science

Due to central Union budgeting cuts, the costs to print I, Science will no longer be covered by the Union. The Union will no longer be paying £3,000 a year to print three issues of the paper. The website remains unaffected.

I have met with this year's editorial team to explain the options for I, Science in the next academic year, which included:

- 1) Becoming their own separate club with their own control over their finances and budgeting
- 2) Being absorbed as a supplement similar to Phoenix; the magazine would be printed within Felix as a pullout and if budgeting allows could be printed as a standalone magazine at the end of the year
- 3) Looking to secure departmental funding from the Centre of Co-Curricular studies or elsewhere, such as from external investors like the Wellcome Trust or from Outreach funding from College (these have both provided funding for the magazine in the past)

We will continue to support the publication as far as we can.

Felix Policy

This is being redrafted by myself and Alex Savell, Deputy President (Finance and Services). The previous policy had several fundamental flaws that needed to be removed and readdressed. These included policy points that on a practical level were unreasonable, and others that were felt infringed on the editorial independence we strive to uphold.

Centrefold Policy

We introduced a series of consent forms for participants, a release form for the photographer and a centrefold disclaimer. All paperwork was circulated to groups wishing to participate in centrefolds that contacted Felix directly beforehand, to ensure all parties were aware of what the centrefold entails, what to expect during a photoshoot conducted by a Felix photographer and when and where they can view the final photo.

As a result there has been no incidents concerning the centrefold this year.

Printing costs

We have remained under budget with the cost of printing our issues this year (surprisingly). We are allocated £29,000 as per the previous Felix budget for the entirety of this academic year, but with issues that are 40 pages costing only around £850, we have enough money remaining in our funding alongside grant money to cover the costs of printing the stand alone Phoenix arts issue.

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Recruitment and handover to next editor

We are currently looking to recruit our editorial team for the next academic year. Section editors are allowed to appoint their successors with guidance from myself and Grace Rahman (Felix Editor elect). We have already held elections for our club committee, and appointed a new Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary last term.

Contrary to last year, there will be an official handover period for Grace and myself in July, before she starts the role officially in September. This will last two weeks.

Grace will also be attending several external training classes, paid for by the central Union budget.

Felix Survey

We are hoping to run this at the end of the term, so we can find out what students have enjoyed or not enjoyed from the paper and hopefully improve it further for next year.

Felix was shortlisted for a Union award this year

Which is incredible and something I am incredibly proud of my team for. We will be the drunkards in the back next Monday, potentially screaming at Chris Kaye to remove garments when he is on stage.

Closing remarks

I would like to thank everyone else who has contributed to the paper this year, either as a writer, editor, or both. I've enjoyed this year immensely and learnt a lot, and am excited to see the amazing issues Grace will produce next year.

Big thanks go to Thomas Lim and Philip Kent, the original Felix core team that keep me on my toes and provide immense support and guidance. I would also like to thank the Officer Trustee team for their help, support and inclusion this year, especially Tom Wheeler. Even after printing him in his shiny short shorts multiple times and objectifying his brother, Tom has provided incredible support, understanding, advice and sometimes just a sympathetic ear when needed.

The same goes to Alex McKee, but don't tell him I said that.

Frequent Q&A

Are you bringing the crossword back to puzzles? I love the crossword!

Hopefully, the student who writes the crosswords is currently revising for exams.

I hate the crossword.

Ok then.

The blue news: is it real?

No, although many students think it is. We are trying to rectify this issue.

We have it on good authority that many members of staff find the blue news "annoying" and "hitting close to home...what is wrong with enjoying yoga every now and then?"

Are you going out with Chris Kaye, Deputy President (Welfare)?

No, but I am not apologetic for raising him to hero-worship status in the student community. We do plan to marry in the future to bring together our powers over government and media, although this marriage will be purely platonic.