

Union Council, 23rd January



Second Term Report, Union Council
23rd January 2018

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Introduction

The first term of the academic year has witnessed promising progress for the Graduate Students' Union. Thanks to an enthusiastic and motivated committee, we are now working towards organising and hosting various events, many of which necessitate exciting collaborations with groups inside and outside of Imperial. We have continued to ensure that both the College and Union given postgraduate matters the attention they deserve.

However, limited financial resource has prevented us from hitting the ground running. We have had to be resourceful in the way we plan and spend, an anxiety which we hope to eliminate through sensible budgeting. Our priority has therefore been scoping what is achievable with the resource we have, and what more we could achieve through increasing our income.

Our strategy was disseminated recently to all postgraduate students. Whilst this fills us with a level of optimism we appreciate that the contents of the strategy will only come to fruition when met with the support of those around us. We therefore invite you to support our efforts in any way possible!

Committee

General committee

Our general committee can be seen below following the results of this year's elections:

- **Brian Ogbogu:** GSU Treasurer
- **Rosemary Pickering:** GSU Secretary
- **Jessamine Shen:** Events Officer
- **Gina Cheng:** Marketing & Publicity Officer
- **James Bass:** Sports & Activities Officer
- **Jan Dvorsky:** Website Officer
- **Yasin Cotur:** Academic & Welfare Officer – Engineering
- **Anwar Sayed:** Academic & Welfare Officer – Medicine
- **Oliver Naef:** Academic & Welfare Officer – Life Sciences
- **Sidrah Ahmed Pai:** Academic & Welfare Officer – Business School
- **Luke Delmas:** Academic & Welfare Officer – Physical Sciences

Proposed amendments

From experiencing the operational workings of the committee so far, we have decided to make some structural amendments to the committee, some of which implicate constitutional changes and others of which are related to timing of elections.

We will propose to Union Council that the Outreach Officer role is removed and that two new positions are created: Events Coordinator (who will act to support the Events Officer) and Social Media Officer (who will primarily support our online marketing efforts).

There will also be a change which involves the Treasurer and Secretary roles being elected in the same election cycle as the President and two Vice Presidents. This ultimately means that the GSU will have five members to work with from an earlier point in the year.

Finances

We have admittedly been working with a challenging state of finances. We are therefore exploring different ways to improve our financial health. Our immediate response to this has been in turning to the Union, hence our recent submission of an ADF application which provides a cost breakdown of the events and activities we would like to hold in the coming year. We have made a bid for £1500 which will be primarily purposed for supporting two of our major upcoming events.

I have now met with the Deans of Engineering, FoNS and the Business School to explore how faculties can support the events we host as a GSU. These meetings largely went well as all Deans expressed an interest in providing money at the very least. Whilst these conversations have been necessary as part of our response to this financial difficulty, they have also served to satisfy one of my manifesto pledges as President which mandated me to establish a 'Graduate Students' Fund'. I would hope that this fund continues to serve and support GSU committees in future, in a similar way to faculties supporting the efforts and activities of undergraduate constituent unions.

Events

GSU Connect

We have partnered with MBa Connect in the Business School to design an event which aims to connect Business School students with postgraduate students from other faculties who may have entrepreneurial ideas. We hope these interactions will provide mutual benefit for all attendees and that students are given the unique opportunity to network with students from other faculties.

The format of the event will adhere to a 'speed dating model' where Business School students are stationed at tables and students from other faculties have the chance to converse with each table for 5-10 minutes. We hope that the Enterprise Lab will be able to provide follow up support for students wanting to collaborate further. The evening will conclude with networking and nibbles.

We are currently in the process of finding an appropriate space to host the event, including a space which fits with our budgetary restrictions. The event will be held on the evening of the 22nd February.

Big Data Hackathon

This event will take place on Saturday 28th April with a typical hackathon format. Students interested in attending will be assigned to certain problems associated with certain companies based on the interests and skills they have provided beforehand.

We are in the process of contacting major companies which have interests in Big Data. Some of these include Shell, Huawei, Citi and PWC to name a few. Our hope is to attract a mix of 5-6 companies spanning several industries to appeal to all disciplines at Imperial. Students will work in multidisciplinary teams (supervised by industry members) to explore these problems throughout the day with a view to presenting their findings at the end.

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Research Event

We are reluctant to release anything concrete at this stage yet our plan is to work with the Graduate School to co-host an event in the final term which is related to research. It is possible that this event will partly serve to celebrate the repurposing of the CDT PhD space as a general postgraduate hub space, yet this should be treated as speculative.

FoNS Research Student Social Committee

The GSU have been very happy in supporting a change made by the Faculty of Natural Sciences to the way research events and seminars are organised. Traditionally, the faculty organised seminars which never attracted the student turnout they deserved. It was agreed at a Research SSC meeting that a student committee would be convened to take full ownership and responsibility for the organisation and hosting of these events; the financial resource allocated for these events has been shifted accordingly from the faculty to this new committee.

The committee is currently chaired by our AWO (Physical Sciences) – Luke Delmas. The first seminar is due to take place on 25th January with a mixture of PhD and academic speakers. The theme of each seminar is intended to appeal to members of all departments in the faculty.

My personal hope as President is that if this committee exceeds what is expected of it and solves the original problem of poor student attendance at the events, then other faculties should be strongly encouraged to adopt similar models.

Representation

PRES Response actions

Nick (ICU DPE) and I met with the Graduate School to digest the actions connected to recommendations put forward in response to the PRES survey results. There is much work to be done on both sides, yet we have already sent around a survey to appropriate research postgraduates to understand the level of discussion they have with their supervisors around key milestones in their PhD, notably the Early Stage Assessment and Late Stage Review.

This survey will be followed by a series of focus groups which will act as a more in depth line of inquiry with different individuals. The results of this exercise we hope should inform appropriate policy around how the College administers ESAs and LSRs.

Postgraduate Hub space

Things have moved along slowly but surely since being mentioned in our last Council report. We are due to meet with College and the Graduate School in due course to explore how the CDT PhD space located in the library could potentially be refurbished and repurposed to cater for a wider postgraduate audience.

The GSU strongly believe that an absence of any designated postgraduate common space has led to continued segregation of different research groups and departments, and hence a lack of community.