

Appendix 1

Student Support Strategy Update

The student support strategy is a collaboration between the College and the Union to look at the support that students are offered while at Imperial. The strategy has been written by Hannah Bannister and is almost finalised.

The Strategy Content

The strategy contains two parts:

- Principles
- Action Points

The principles are 5 sentences that are meant to act as guidelines for all members of staff across College when thinking about Student Support. The main points are:

- It is everyone's role to support wellbeing.
- We will consider the student experience and make it less stressful.
- We won't judge students.
- We will tailor support to individuals/groups.
- We will be consistent across departments, where possible.

The action points state what we are actually going to do. They are:

- Student Mental Health Strategy
- Suicide Prevention Strategy
- Targeted Support Packages
- College Transition Programme
- Induction to the College
- Peer Mentoring Scheme
- Staff Training and Support
- College-wide case Management System
- Relationships with External Organisations

Consultation

Consultation about the strategy went to students and staff around the end of the summer term and was kept open over the summer. 258 students responded and 220 staff members. The consultation confirmed that the main concepts were valid and no major issues were expressed.

Staff response

The staff focused on the responsibility being shared by all staff and were a little unsure how the principles will be embedded. They queried how you could be consistent but also tailored. They prioritised staff training and would like help knowing how and when to refer students.

Student Response

The student response came fairly equally from different departments but there was a larger than normal response from PhD students. Students seemed happy with the work being done, although some were sceptical about anything actually changing.

In terms of the principles, students prioritised College reducing the pressure that is put on them and didn't want to feel judged. There was a clear call for the students to be listened to and for the strategy to work for everyone. One of the principles mentions Imperial as a "painful rite of passage" and how College will work to stop this happening. Student responses were split fairly equally around whether this should or shouldn't be the case.

In terms of the action points, students highlighted mental health as a priority. However based on some of the comments they don't really know what it means, or what they would like to see happen to help the issue.

Next Steps

Nothing major will be changing to the strategy as the consultation showed no problems with it. However this needs to be communicated effectively to show students that there feedback has been listened to.

I feel this communication should include:

- A promise that we will make sure students are listened to.
- A promise that we will ensure it works for all students.
- An explanation on why Imperial should not be a painful experience including a promise that their education will be not be compromised.
- An explanation for why a strategy was written in the first place.

The strategy is being taken to the Learning & Teaching Committee followed by Provost Board. It should be approved for an early 2019 launch.

Early stage discussions are already taking place around some of the action points including the Mental Health Strategy, the College-Wide Case Management System and Induction to College. Although there are no plans so far and they are largely dependent on budgeting rounds.