



G S U

IMPERIAL GRADUATE
STUDENTS' UNION

Activity Report to ICU Council
June 2020

Overview:

This report covers activity since the end of January. Much has happened since then, including the phenomenal GSU Ball, as well as adapting to the current COVID-19 situation by introducing a range of online events, and a ramp up in meeting attendance and representation.

Representation:

We continue to attend several college and faculty level meetings, as well as new meetings that have been established in response to COVID-19.

COVID-19 Response:

We want to ensure your voices are being heard. **Please fill in departmental surveys, read the policies**, and get in contact if you feel these are not being implemented. We are stressing that lab closures are not the only thing affecting students and their ability to work, and that wellbeing also plays an especially important role during these times. We are advocating clear communication from College to both students and departments and supervisors.

- VP (Representation) has been attending several college level meetings set up in response to COVID-19. This was not right from the outset, but ICU has been helpful in coordinating our inclusion in several meetings pertaining to PG students. This includes the Education Group, and now the Student Experience Group. Matters that have been discussed include the [safety net policy](#), [Masters registration policy](#), and the [PGR stipend extension policy](#), among many other topics. We are also discussing registration extension policies. VP (Representation) will be co-leading on the 'Research Culture' aspect in the Student Experience Group.
- We have collated information from some departmental reps on the implementation of the PGT registration policy as well as the safety net policy for some PGT programmes and raised these issues and concerns from students back up to a Faculty level. The Faculty Vice Deans of Education have been working to ensure departments are all compliant/consistent as far as possible. We have been advocating the involvement of student reps in matters surrounding the implementation of these policies in each department.
- We have been helping to coordinate departmental surveys amongst PGR students to assess the impact of COVID-19 in a college wide manner. We are also receiving results from some national surveys. We hope to use the information to further drive discussions and outline where the key issues lie.
- Issues raised at faculty level meetings (see below) are being raised at college level where appropriate.
- Please get in contact with Milia (gsacoord@ic.ac.uk) if you wish to raise any concerns that you feel cannot be/are not resolved at a departmental level.

PRES:

- Earlier in the year, ICU and GSU published a response to last year's PRES 2019 survey (PG Research Experience Survey). The Graduate School and Postgraduate Research Quality Committee established a task and finish group to review these recommendations. The recommendations made were divided into four themes: Creating Effective Student-Supervisor Partnerships, Supervisor Support and Development, Doctoral Student Wellbeing and Poor Supervision and Research Culture and Environment.
- The College has now approved some recommendations and published a list of actions they will be taking [here](#). This includes greater visibility of the "[mutual expectations document](#)" and a new £10,000 community development fund for PG students.

AWO/SSC meetings:

- Faculty of Nat. Sci Research
 - FoNS had an additional emergency meeting to address concerns of students directly affecting covid-19 particularly concerning lab closures and funded extensions, particularly there were concerns that students may be affected by covid-19 even if there were able to work from home on their project (e.g have computational projects) due to caring responsibilities, mental health impacts or sub-standard working conditions. These issues were all later detailed in the funding and extensions policy which was published after this meeting. It was noted that supervisors should be supporting their students working from home and be mindful that the current situation is likely to affect the efficiency of the students work
 - There remains concern that first year PhD students had been affected (and not covered by the current policy) have been 'forgotten' - departments and the faculty explained they were waiting for UKRI to direct how first years will be supported financially.
 - ESA & LSR deadlines extensions and flexibility had not been uniformly given across the departments within the faculty this was raised and dealt with by the Vice Dean of Education (Prof. Emma McCoy).
 - In light of the covid-19 issue the faculty has decided to organise an additional SSC meeting following the phased return to work to see how the changing situation is continuing to impact the students.
- Faculty of Engineering:
 - FoE had meetings with the departmental reps to address concerns and issues related to covid-19. Students reported concerns about the lack of clear communication from the college regarding PhD extensions for deadlines and funding, especially for those with lab-based projects. Students were also worried that computational projects were overlooked as needing extensions, even though some require facilities in the college that could not be accessed remotely. These meetings were held before the policy was released, and since then, most of these issues have been addressed.
 - Students reported that moving to online meetings with their supervisors was successful, and these meetings were held at similar rates as they were prior to lockdown. In some cases, attendance rates increased in group meetings as it was simpler for people to join online.
 - Remote ESAs, LSRs and Vivas have also been successful, however the departments did not inform students of the flexibility of the deadlines for those.

Signposting Campaign:

We have been meaning to initiate a signposting campaign for postgraduate students to help identify different points of contact in different areas of support. This is an especially important time for students to understand and seek what support is available to them. Work has begun on this, and we hope to launch the campaign as soon as possible.

Operations:

Events:

- This year saw the second instalment of our annual GSU Ball: **The Postgraduate Leap Year Ball**. This was the highlight of the Postgraduate events calendar and sold out an outstanding 450 tickets. The aim of the ball was to help create a sense of community by allowing students from a range of departments and faculties to come together and have a night away from work. The venue was a live music venue which allowed us to have a live band performing. This was 'the Gastric Band,' whose membership includes college staff and postgraduate students. This was followed by a live DJ set performed by none other than 'Ribbon guy' himself, another postgraduate student! There was also food available on the night as well as a Pic'n'Mix stall and a selfie mirror. We received lots of (mostly positive) feedback about the event from attendees, and we hope this information is useful to next year's committee.
- Second round of the West Campus Board Game Night hosted at Hammersmith Campus was successful. Moving forward we want to monthly alternate between White City and Hammersmith Campus on the last Tuesday of each month. We want to pick this back up once circumstances allow us to.
- Online: We set up a virtual Yoga class for all PG students every Thursday at lunch time. These sessions are in aid of the Lumi Foundation which is a charity committed to making yoga accessible to all. By supporting the Foundation, we're helping them bring yoga to communities around West London.
So far with had good attendance with around 10-12 people and numbers are rising every week. These sessions will continue throughout June.
- Online: GSU bi-weekly pub quizzes hosted by our events team (Hannah and Michaela) and have been very successful. It has brought together an "on-line" community with ~40 attendees for each quiz. Feedback has been excellent.

PG Hub:

- Work on creating a PG hub within the south Kensington campus has been on-going
- Since the current COVID-19 situation this has been put on hold, but recently been brought back into the picture due to the future need of space within college to abide by social distancing guidance.
- A new summary document has been written, summarising the results of the survey (over 1400 responses) and the Colleges Space occupancy data.

H-bar proposal:

- A consultation on h-bar and what students/staff wanted from the space was started just before college closure.
- Unfortunately, this has not been completed due to other priorities.
- Consultation data has been written up into a draft document and will be passed on to next year's committee.

Finance:

- The virtual Yoga classes meant a charitable donation of 125GBP for 5 lessons. Continuing these sessions all through June, means another donation of 125GBP.
- Online pub quizzes have offered given amazon vouchers as prizes. A Zoom Pro account was used to conduct the quizzes.

Preparing for handover/Closing remarks:

It is that time of year where our time as a committee is sadly coming to a close. We are preparing a representation team handover document and are working with the Graduate School and ICU to help ensure a smooth handover to the next committee. Preparation for handover and up to date documents are currently been planned.

This does not mean our activities are coming to an end just yet. We will continue to offer representation, support, and community building activities where we can. If possible, we will continue work on our GSU introduction video, and to help make sure things are in place for next year's committee.

We have had a very interesting year in committee with some exciting events and achievements. We would like to thank the committee members for their hard work as well as thank all of you for a great year together in Council!