

# Deputy President (Welfare) – Council report

Shervin Sabeghi – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021

## Introduction – *Keeping my head above water*

Hi everyone! The theme of the last month has been ‘keeping my head above water’. Due to an extremely busy start to the term, negatively offset by a lack of motivation as inspired by the lockdown, there’s been a lot of catching up happening over the last 4 weeks. However, the deluge of College meetings persists and plugging the gaps left by unfilled staff posts at the Union means more and more work weeks are spilling into the weekend. And, despite always running in the hamster wheel, little progress on bigger tasks seems to happen. However, we’re still keeping the College in-check on a daily basis and keeping the Union ticking on!

## How I’ve spent my time since the last report (13<sup>th</sup> January – 9<sup>th</sup> February)

College Meetings and 121s	Union Meetings	Desk work (day-to-day)	Time with students + comms	Project work	Recruiting
30%	20%	25%	15%	5%	5%

## Key latest updates

- Representation and Advice Manager: we have successfully finished recruiting this role back into ICU. I’m extremely excited about the chosen candidate – she’s very well experienced in Higher Education policy, has experience of Students’ Unions and is really keen on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. When she starts, she’ll be tackling the support model for reps and LCOs, working on training for new reps and building a new Representation and Advice team at ICU. We aim to have a new Representation Coordinator to work under the new manager in place around Easter.
- Fair assessment/No detriment: Michaela’s report will have more details, but we’ve continued to progress on this matter with the College and are close to having a finalised package. The areas of agreement so far are around generous mitigating circumstances with flexible self-certification; in-year resits available for all students with any resit fees waived; setting a defined period of time (currently 8am-10pm) in which students can take exams regardless of what time zone they’re in (i.e. some students will start later than the main group). There’s more discussion to be had in terms of what analysis and scaling is applied to cohort level results, and how students who have mit circs but just pass/are on grade boundaries are dealt with in lieu of uncapped resits.
- Halls: we’ve been engaging the College in conversations around halls with three main updates: 1) rent waivers for term 2 are being extended until 8<sup>th</sup> March (although it seems inevitable they’ll be extended further still), 2) a lot of the adaptations to halls from this year will likely continue – such as defined households, cutting down shared rooms etc – so we’ll continue to work with the College to make that work, 3) as part of this, we’re advocating for a more in-depth household matching system when allocating hall rooms in response to a lot of students wishing they were given households with people they’d get on with better. Another small win, too, I’ve managed to get the

College to agree to not reduce the Hall Social Fund allocated to each hall despite them collecting significantly less rent than forecasted at the beginning of the year. This will enable halls committees to continue to put on events as much as possible for those students who are still in halls.

- Representation Networks: instigated by a chat with faculty welfare officers, we're stepping up the communication and support for reps (despite having no staff support). We've reintroduced fortnightly rep newsletters and brought back Rep of the Month, which is a scheme to recognise and reward the achievements of reps.
- Discipline matters: unfortunately, disciplinary matters continue to be on my plate. Since the last meeting, I've sat on a further two halls Residence Tribunals and one College disciplinary panel. These can be a bit of a time drain but having student representation there is important to ensure both the accused party and the student community as a whole are considered fairly.
- Leadership Elections 2021: nominations for the elections to replace us are now open! As I'm ineligible to run for anything (we can legally only do these roles for 2 years max!) I've taken a more active role in planning for these to try and add more of the student/candidate perspective to these. **If any of you are thinking about running for my role**, please reach out and I'll be more than happy to chat about it!

## My 2020/21 objectives

Here are updates against my objectives.

- 1) Liberation and Community (L&C) Development:** a planned Liberation Week in February is no longer being planned, for two key reasons: there's not enough people-power to do it and so much is happening anyway in this area of February and March that it would seem silly to force things into a fabricated week. Instead, I'll be working on 'curating', so to speak, the activities of the L&C networks into a defined stream of events and promote them to raise the profile collectively.
- 2) Representation Network Review:** Due to start later in term when Representation Manager has been hired.
- 3) COVID-19 Response:** Ongoing ESOG (Education Strategy and Operation Group) meetings dealing with all COVID student experience and teaching issues. Largely focusing on fair assessment/no detriment and student support over lockdown.
- 4) Student Discipline and Harassment:** Club culture work on-going, not too much to update yet. Work on the Union's discipline policies will have happened in the time between submitting this report and the meeting, so can update verbally. Abhijay and I are also taking things forward on the College side where there is a lot of discontent from students about how discipline matters are handled.
- 5) Campaigns and Student Voice:** Again, slowed down due to loss of staff support. Until a proper format is sorted, will continue to support campaigns on an ad-hoc informal basis.

**Congrats if you've read this far! Please feel free to drop me an email whenever at [dpwelfare@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:dpwelfare@imperial.ac.uk) if you've got any questions or feedback.**