

Paper for Discussion: Postgraduate Engagement and Representational Structures review Project Outline

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1. A review of PG Engagement and Representation Structures was initiated in June and is still currently ongoing.
2. The planned conclusion of the project has been pushed back from November to January in order to allow additional time for research before forming recommendations.
3. A project plan has been developed by ICU Advice and Representation Manager Cat Turhan, in consultation with myself, which outlines some key details of the project. This plan is presented in an appendix to this paper to be noted by Council. Any feedback on the plan is welcome.

Imperial College Union
Project initiation document
Postgraduate Engagement and Representational Structures review

Purpose: To provide a review of postgraduate engagement and representational structures at Imperial College Union

1. Introduction

Imperial College Union (ICU) is aiming to improve the experience of postgraduate (PG) students, both through an assessment of its current support and offering to this cohort, and the current structures which underpin postgraduate representation.

2. Rationale for a review

The decision to implement a review was taken in the summer of 2021. This was owing to a notable lack of support for PG students from the ICU, and structural issues with the Graduate Students' Union (GSU). This juncture presents a positive opportunity for change. As ICU transitions out of the pandemic and many union services are in the process of reopening, there is an opportunity to set forward a new way of doing things for PG students on a relatively clean slate.

In particular, there is a need to facilitate better postgraduate communities (a particular focus of the Presidents' manifesto), as well as supporting postgraduate mental health.

3. Key Questions

- How can ICU better foster a PG community at every campus?
- How can ICU better support PG student mental health and wellbeing?
- How can ICU staff and officers better support PG representation?
- Is the GSU fit for purpose? Is there a more effective structure which could support PG representation?

4. Timeline of review activity

This table documents activity which has already taken place, as well as future activity.

Activity	Lead	Date
Working group established	President	June 2021
Initial analysis of postgraduate students at Imperial College, and their engagement with ICU.	ICU staff	July 2021
Survey of postgraduate students	President (with support from ICU staff)	September 2021
Focus groups with postgraduate students	President (with support from ICU staff)	September 2021
Interviews with engaged postgraduate students (including some former GSU presidents)	President	October 2021
Further analysis of existing data, including event participation, election turnouts, student experience survey data	President (with support from ICU staff)	November 2021

Finalising report and recommendations	President and working group	December 2021
Present the report to Council and the Board of Trustees	President	January 2022
Elect postgraduate representatives	ICU	February 2022

5. Working group

The working group is made up of the following people:

- Lloyd James (President)
- Daniel Tin Lo (Deputy President Education)
- Michaela Flegrová (Union Council chair, current PhD student, former Deputy President Education)
- Milia Hasbani
- Leonie Strömlich (White City Officer)
- Ceire Wincott (Natural Sciences AWO)

The Representation team provides administrative and research support to these positions. If you are interested in joining the working group, contact Lloyd on union.president@imperial.ac.uk

6. Potential outputs from the review

The President will write a report presenting the findings and a number of recommendations which will aim to support changes to postgraduate engagement and representation at ICU. Some of these recommendations *may* include, and are not limited to:

- The removal or a restructure of the GSU
- Dedicated staff time for postgraduate representatives
- A dedicated website page for postgraduates on the ICU website
- Postgraduate representatives on the events committee
- A set of metrics for evaluating the GSU's performance going forward, in line with the ICU *Back to Basics* strategy.

As part of the report, ICU will include a PG engagement plan which will explain how the ICU will take a holistic approach to supporting PG students.

7. Next steps

This paper is for Council to note, and the working group will continue with the next steps as listed on the review activity timeline. If you have any further questions about the review, please contact Lloyd on union.president@imperial.ac.uk