

## **Student Involvement in the Curriculum Review Process – A Proposed Framework for working with Students as Partners**

### **Background:**

The *Learning & Teaching Strategy*<sup>1</sup> sets out an ambitious programme of work that aims to establish Imperial College London as a global leader in innovative, evidence-based education. One key area that the *Learning & Teaching Strategy* commits to is a review of the existing curricula:

- Pg.3: *“We will review our curriculum and create more space for innovation in education, for multidisciplinary activities and for students’ engagement with teachers, with each other, and with the world outside of Imperial.”*
- Pg.12: *“A review of all programmes will reduce curriculum content and volume of assessment, therefore creating time and space for students to reflect on, and integrate, their knowledge.”*

Furthermore, the *Learning & Teaching Strategy* recognises the importance that students can play in this process, and commits to working with students as partners in reviewing the existing curriculum:

- Pg.14: *“When reviewing and redesigning curricula, an appreciation of the differences in background and in the personal and professional identity of our students will be central to our approach... Ensuring that all of our students are seen and heard, this work will be undertaken in partnership with students and teaching assistants from a broad range of backgrounds.”*
- Pg.19: *“A process of curriculum review and the introduction of new ways of teaching and assessment will take time, careful thought and effort. It will be a facilitated, collaborative process led by academic staff with the active engagement of our students.”*

While the student body recognises and appreciates the commitments made in the *Learning & Teaching Strategy* to involve students in the curriculum review process, it notes that there is no formal, over-arching guidance for departments on this process.

This draft framework, co-written by the Deputy President (Education) and Departmental and Faculty level Academic Representatives, aims to provide guidance to departments in how to integrate students with the curriculum review process.

### **Key features:**

1. All departments should recognise that their students are an excellent potential source of information and ideas, which can be utilised to achieve the objectives set out in the *Learning & Teaching Strategy*.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/about/leadership-and-strategy/vp-education/public/LearningTeachingStrategy.pdf>

2. All departments should ensure that students are actively encouraged to participate in the curriculum review process, providing clear, transparent opportunities for student engagement. Where appropriate, incentives may be used to encourage participation.
3. All departments should ensure that Academic Representatives are actively encouraged to participate in the curriculum review process, providing clear, transparent opportunities for Academic Representative engagement. Where appropriate, incentives may be used to encourage participation.
4. All departments should explore how existing learning outcomes compare with students' (current and alumni) perceptions of their learning
5. All departments should be transparent in their curriculum review process, sharing progress information with Academic Representatives and the wider student body

The below paragraphs expand upon each of these features:

### **1. Acknowledging that students are a key source of ideas:**

Departments should recognise the unique perspective that their students can bring to the curriculum review process. Students experience their courses first hand and will be able to easily identify areas of curriculum overload. By working in partnership with students, departments will be able to streamline course content while still achieving the stipulated learning outcomes. In addition, students can be a source of new pedagogical ideas – they are familiar with new technology, and can play a critical role in identifying where new teaching methods can be introduced.

### **2. Involving students in the curriculum review process:**

Departments should strive to involve all students in the curriculum review process. They should aim to engage students through a number of approaches, both online and offline, including but not limited to: surveys, interviews, focus groups, “town hall” meetings and workshops. Departments should consider offering incentives to students in order to encourage participation.

### **3. Involving Academic Representatives in the curriculum review process:**

Departments should ensure that all Academic Representatives<sup>2</sup> are given the option of participating in the curriculum review process. Academic Representatives may be engaged through a number of approaches, both online and offline, including but not limited to: surveys, interviews, focus groups, “town hall” meetings and workshops. Departments should seek to involve Academic Representatives in the planning, promotion, and coordination of the initiatives outlined in point 2. Where possible, results of these initiatives should be shared with the Academic Representatives.

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<sup>2</sup> This includes Year Reps, Departmental Reps and the relevant Academic Affairs Officer

#### **4. Comparing intended learning outcomes with perceived student outcomes**

Departments should consult existing students and recent alumni to determine which knowledge and skills students feel they have gained from their degree. This will help departments to gauge the alignment between intended learning outcomes and students' perceptions of their own learning, identifying potential areas for improvement.

#### **5. Sharing information on the progress of curriculum review with the student body**

In order to truly consider students as partners in this process, departments should put systems in place to transparently provide information about the progress of the curriculum review with the student body. At the very least, Academic Representatives should be regularly updated on progress of the curriculum review and signposted to relevant discussion fora. This form of "passive involvement" will ensure that all students feel they are a part of the process, even those less willing to "actively" contribute, reinforcing the College's commitment to engage with students during the curriculum review.

#### **Closing remarks:**

The curriculum review is a significant undertaking, but is of vital importance to ensure departments are able to meet the goals outlined in the *Learning & Teaching Strategy*. It is imperative that departments recognise the value that students can bring, and work in partnership with them throughout the process. By involving both Academic Representatives and the wider student body (including alumni, where possible), departments will ensure that all students have the chance to contribute to the process. By being transparent and sharing progress with students, departments will allay any concerns that major decisions are being made about students, without students.