Academic Representation Network

Wellbeing Representation Network

Imperial College Union Academic & Wellbeing Representatives Handbook

imperial college union

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Welcome to Imperial College Union

Congratulations on becoming a crucial part of the Representation Network at Imperial College Union! This is an excellent opportunity for you to empower yourself and those around you to create positive changes at the College.

Students are proud to study at Imperial, and without feedback from student representatives, they would not experience the world-class education they have today. Your role is to continue that journey and ensure that all students have the best possible time during their studies.

We know that being a rep is not always easy, and hope that this handy guide, as well as our in-person training, will support you in your role. However, if you need any support or guidance – the representation team at the Union are here to help you. Feel free to drop by and see us on the second floor of Beit, or send an email to icu.representation@imperial.ac.uk.

Finally, we hope you have fun in this role! It's a fantastic opportunity to meet new people, develop skills and connections, and experience your course in a completely new way. We are proud to have you on board!

The Rep Team

The Representation Networks

The Union's **Representation Network** is a body of **over 500 academic and wellbeing student representatives** from across all Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes and research groups at Imperial College.

Its aim is to **improve the academic and wellbeing experience** at Imperial by facilitating opportunities for students and departments to work together with the Union to address student feedback.

Representatives are responsible for:

- collecting student views on issues
- raising feedback
- developing solutions
- closing the feedback loop
- signposting students

Having a network of trained student representatives ensures that feedback can be collected efficiently and accurately so that the student voice has an influence on College decision-making.

Academic and Wellbeing representatives represent students in different areas, which are outlined in our Representation Network diagram below.

ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION NETWORK | **WELLBEING** REPRESENTATION NETWORK

HEALTH
mental, physical, sexual, emotional

ASSESSMENT ISSUES
examination timings, coursework, feedback

FINANCIAL CONCERN
accomodation/rent, student loan repayments, part-time employment

LEARNING EXPERIENCE
workload, availability of staff support

RELATIONSHIPS
bullying, harassment, sexual violence, isolation, loneliness, withdrawal

RESOURCES
eLearning, ICT provisions, quality of learning space

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY
ensuring minority groups are represented, upholding Imperial Expectations

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE
any issues related to the academic experience

PERSONAL SAFETY
communication, risk awareness, city living, travelling alone

The Representation Networks

Within the Representation Network, there are 4 different levels of representation:

Deputy President

Your Deputy Presidents are elected by students to improve the student experience at Imperial by representing your views to the College and running campaigns and projects on issues affecting Imperial students. Each Deputy President covers different areas of the student experience, so for academic issues, the Deputy President (Education) will be a key contact, and for wellbeing issues, this will be the Deputy President (Welfare).

Faculty Representatives

Faculty Reps are the highest level of voluntary roles within the Representation Network. They represent all students in their faculty to senior staff and the Union by collating and raising feedback from department reps in their faculty. Faculty Reps lead and support Department Reps and develop the rep community. There are two faculty representatives in each faculty: one academic, and one welfare.

Please note: Faculty rep positions are also known as education officers, vice presidents, wellbeing officers, and chairs in some CUs.

Departmental Representatives

Department Reps oversee the Year Reps and represent all students in their department. They collate and, if necessary, evidence feedback from Year Reps, and raise it with departmental staff. There are usually two Department Reps per department: one academic, and one welfare.
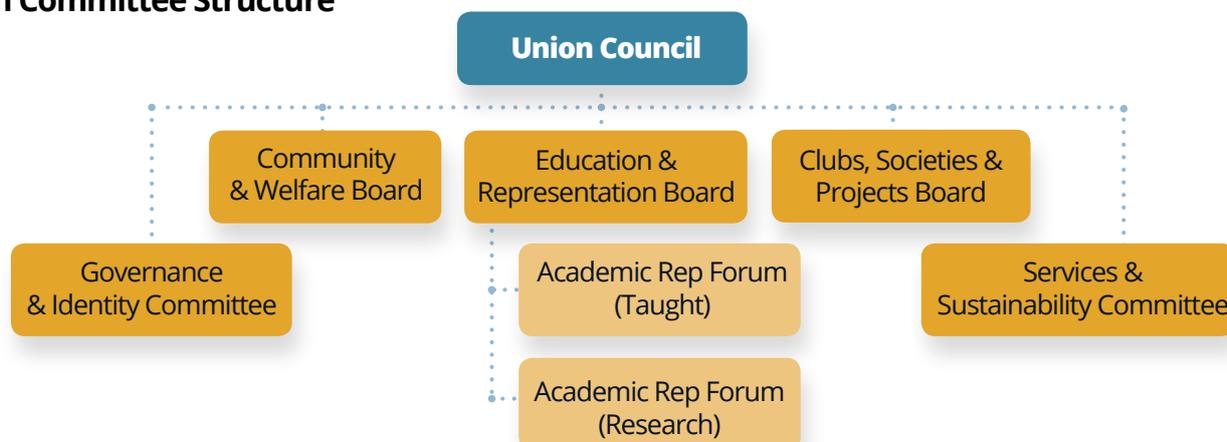
Year/Course/Group Representatives

These Reps are the largest group of reps in the Representation Network as they represent all students in their year group. They are expected to collect feedback from their cohort, address it with staff at programme level, and pass it onto their Department Rep – especially if it is feedback that cannot be resolved at programme level.
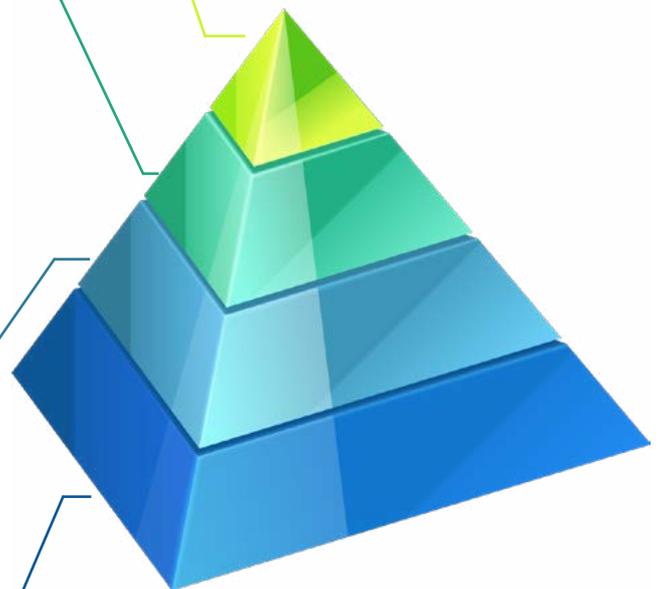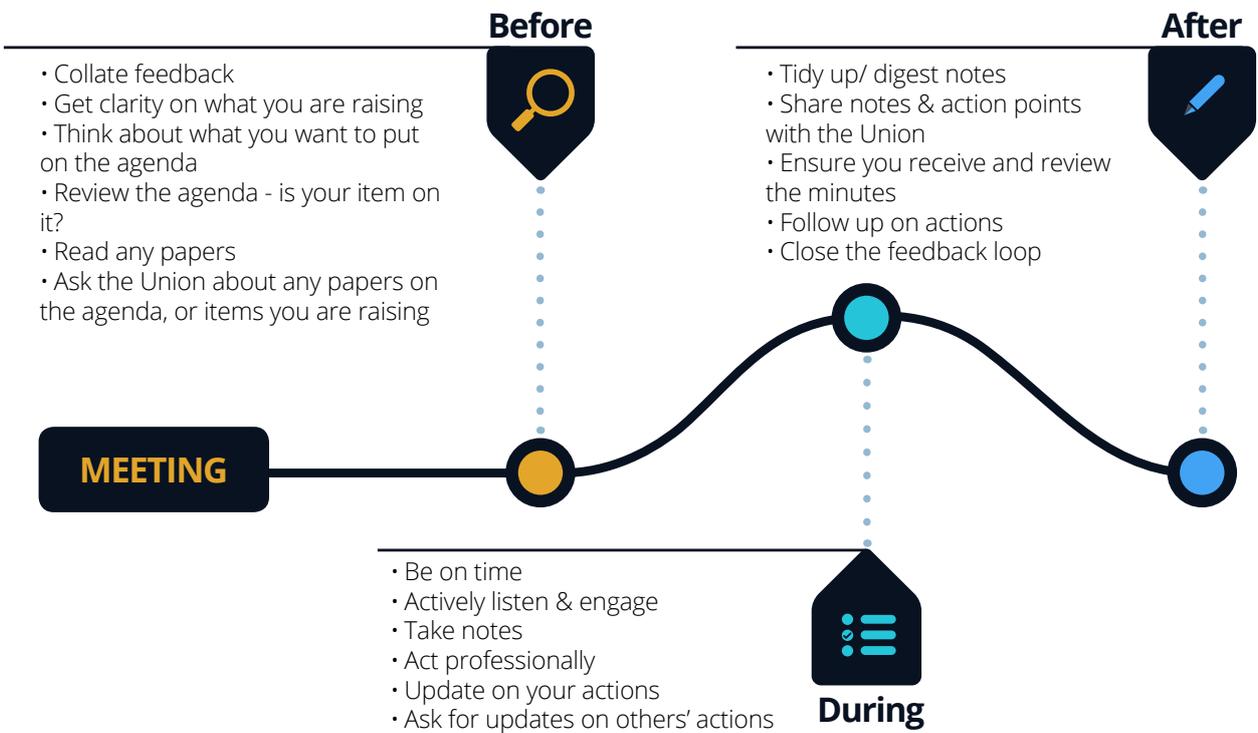
Meetings

Union Committee Structure

Committees Meetings

	Name	Attendees	Frequency	Purpose
Union Meetings	Union Council	• Officer Trustees • All CU Presidents • Council Reps • Council Chair • Management Group Chairs • Liberation & Community Officers • Faculty Reps	Every 4 weeks	Represents the voice of students to set Union Policy
	Education & Representation Board (ERB)	• All UG Academic Faculty Reps • All PG Faculty Reps • DP(Education) (Chair) • CU Presidents	Twice per term	Acts as a forum for issues & campaigns relating to education policy
	Community & Welfare Board (CWB)	• All UG Welfare Faculty Reps • All UG Welfare Department Reps • All PG Faculty Reps • DP(Welfare) (Chair) • CU Presidents	Twice per term	Forum for issues & campaigns relating to community & welfare policy
	Academic Rep Forums	• All Faculty Reps • All Department Reps	Once per term	Informal space for academic reps to discuss feedback & best practice
College Meetings	Faculty Staff-Student Committees / Student Staff Liaison Groups	• Deputy President (Education) • Faculty Rep (Chair) • Faculty Staff • Department Staff • Department Reps	Once per term	Each faculty has their own SSCs/ SSLGs to discuss academic policy & education, feedback and advise & monitor policies and procedures
	Departmental Staff-Student Committees / Student Staff Liaison Groups	• Department Rep (Chair) • Department Staff • Faculty Staff • Faculty Reps • Year Reps	Once per term	The same as faculty SSCs/ SSLGs, but at a departmental level
	Faculty Education Committees	• Deputy President (Education) • Faculty Reps • Faculty Staff	Twice per term	To ensure best practice is implemented in learning & teaching across the faculty
	Department Teaching Committees	• Department Reps • Departmental Staff • Year Reps	Once per term	The same as Faculty Education Committees, but at a departmental level

Meetings

Engaging in Meetings Effectively

To be able to make changes, it is important that reps effectively engage in the meetings they attend. Here are some tips on what reps should be doing before, during and after meetings:

Before

• Collate feedback
• Get clarity on what you are raising
• Think about what you want to put on the agenda
• Review the agenda - is your item on it?
• Read any papers
• Ask the Union about any papers on the agenda, or items you are raising

After

• Tidy up/ digest notes
• Share notes & action points with the Union
• Ensure you receive and review the minutes
• Follow up on actions
• Close the feedback loop

MEETING

During

• Be on time
• Actively listen & engage
• Take notes
• Act professionally
• Update on your actions
• Ask for updates on others' actions

Collecting Feedback

Part of a representative's role is to collect student feedback to ensure that decisions being made around the Union and College have considered the student voice. Here are some ways reps have previously collected feedback from students:

- Surveys
- Emails
- Social media
- In meetings
- Beginning/end of lectures
- Drop-in sessions

It is really important that students know how to contact their reps when they have feedback to share, so it is a good idea for reps to introduce themselves to their cohort after they have been elected.

As well as considering ways to collect feedback from students, reps should also think about how they ask questions. Sometimes, asking broad, open-ended questions can make it challenging for students to provide feedback. Reps could try to base the questions they are asking off the Representation Network Diagram.

Academic Reps

- Can you access all the learning resources you need for your programme?

- Are you satisfied with the quality and timeliness of assessment feedback?

- How are you finding the workload on your programme?
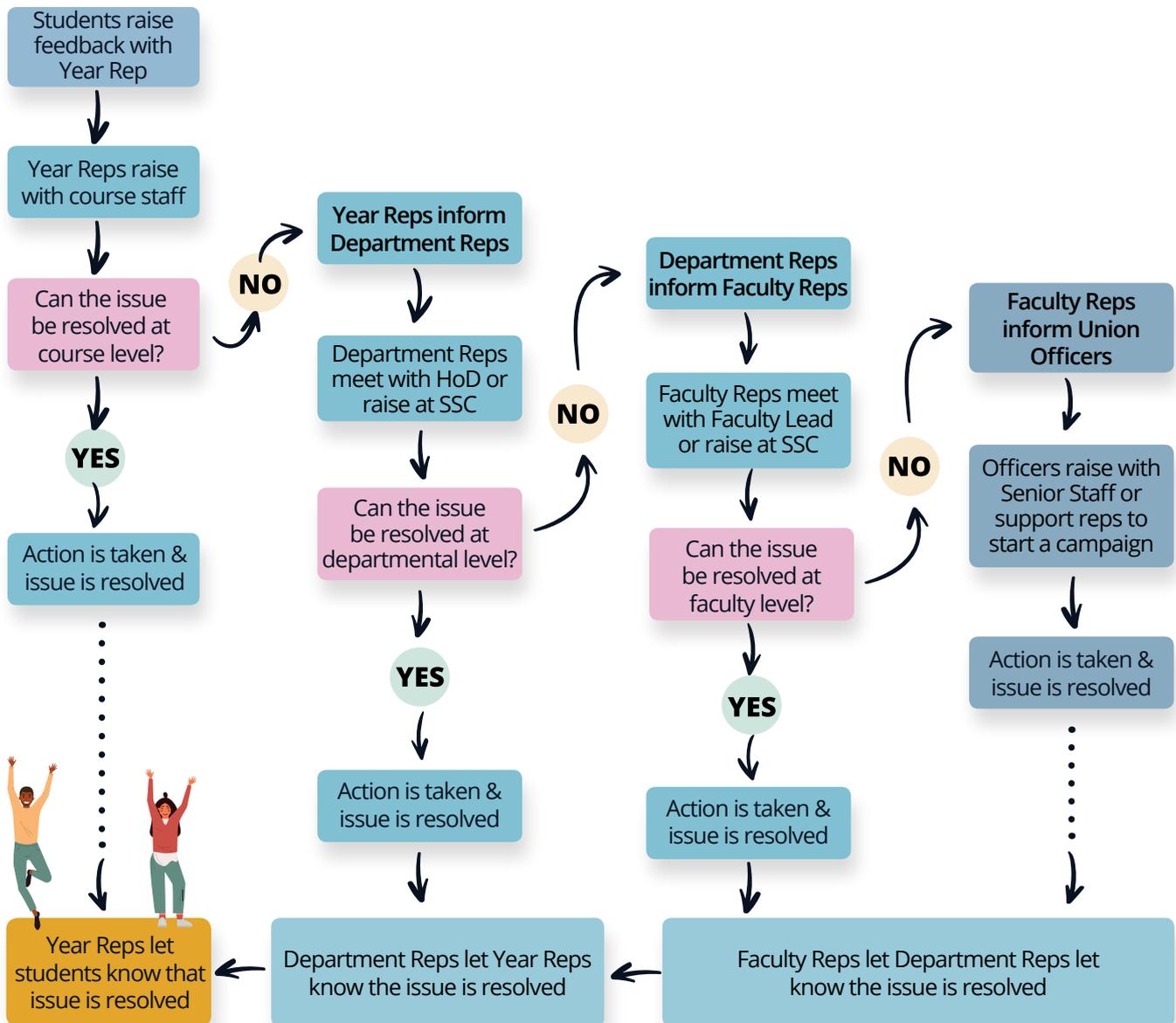
Wellbeing Reps

- Do you know how to access the financial services at the College?

- Do you feel that Imperial College is inclusive and representative of different communities?

- How do you think the provision of Wellbeing support at the College could be improved?

Raising Feedback

The process for raising feedback is outlined below:

Students raise feedback with Year Rep → Year Reps raise with course staff → Can the issue be resolved at course level?

NO → Year Reps inform Department Reps → Department Reps meet with HoD or raise at SSC → Can the issue be resolved at departmental level?

NO → Department Reps inform Faculty Reps → Faculty Reps meet with Faculty Lead or raise at SSC → Can the issue be resolved at faculty level?

NO → Faculty Reps inform Union Officers → Officers raise with Senior Staff or support reps to start a campaign → Action is taken & issue is resolved

YES (course level) → Action is taken & issue is resolved → Year Reps let students know that issue is resolved

YES (departmental level) → Action is taken & issue is resolved → Department Reps let Year Reps know the issue is resolved → Year Reps let students know that issue is resolved

YES (faculty level) → Action is taken & issue is resolved → Faculty Reps let Department Reps let know the issue is resolved → Department Reps let Year Reps know the issue is resolved

When raising feedback, reps should ensure that it is being done in an Accurate, Balanced, Constructive, and Depersonalised way. You can remember this by using '**ABCD**':

Accurate: you should present information correctly and not give your own interpretation to ensure that students' issues can be effectively understood and addressed as appropriate.

Balanced: feedback should be representative of all students (the collective voice), whilst also considering the needs of different student groups.

Constructive: constructive feedback is something that can be acted on, and focuses on the solutions rather than the problem.

Depersonalised: it is good to use examples to illustrate your point, but make sure this is presented as a group issue, rather than an individual. It will carry more weight if it is something that clearly affects many students, and does not run risk of identifying a particular student who has offered the feedback.

Closing the Feedback Loop

Closing the feedback loop means **letting the relevant people know what actions and outcomes have resulted from their feedback.** For reps, letting students know what their feedback has resulted in ensures that they are accountable, they maintain the trust of students, and it encourages students to continue providing feedback.

Some ways that reps can close the feedback loop include:

- Sharing outcomes in Union meetings
- Sharing any meeting minutes with students (where appropriate)
- Social media
- Emails
- Beginning/ends of lectures
- Letting the Union know any big wins so we can include it in our emails and social media

Signposting

As a rep, students may approach you for support relating to their mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, it is important for you as reps to know the boundaries of your role, and what you should and should not be expected to deal with. This is particularly important for **wellbeing reps.**

What your role is	What your role is not
• To listen • To collate feedback on general wellbeing issues related to the course (e.g. work-life balance) and communicate this to the College. • To signpost them to relevant services	• To act as a counsellor or therapist to a student • To disclose a named individual's issues to the College (or anyone else without explicit permission)

In a case where students do approach you about anything you are not expected or trained to deal with, here is a list of where you should signpost students to in these scenarios:

• **ICU Advice Centre** – Free, confidential and impartial advice on academic, housing or financial issues, advice@imperial.ac.uk

• **Wardening team** - Provides pastoral support for people living in halls: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-support-zone/support/in-your-halls/

• **Counselling and mental health team -** Provides free, professional mental health support: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/counselling/

• **Disability advisory service** - Supports disabled students or students with a specific learning difficulty: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/

• **Student support fund** - For students who might need financial assistance: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/fees-and-funding/financial-assistance/student-support-fund/

• **Personal tutoring** - Provides academic support to students: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-support-zone/support/in-your-department/

• **Report and Support** - A tool that can be used to disclose incidents of bullying, harassment and sexual violence anonymously, Report + Support - Imperial College London

• **SVLOs** - Support for students who have experienced sexual violence: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-support-zone/student-services/sexual-violence-support/meet-the-sexual-violence-liaison-officer-team/

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is student representation important?

Student representation empowers the student community to lead their own changes and shape their experiences and institution. It ensures that students' needs, and interests are understood at College level, so that decisions can reflect what students have identified as priorities. Student representation is a crucial part of the continuous development of the overall student experience.

How will I be rewarded?

Being a rep enables you to become part of a community. It is important to ensure your hard work is recognised and rewarded, and we do this in a variety of ways. Reps will be invited to social events throughout the year organised by the Union. Additionally, we run rep of the month and rep of the year schemes, voted on by you. The winning rep receives a certificate, a pin badge, and a shoutout in the rep newsletter and on the website. They also win a gift voucher for a retailer of their choice (£20 for rep of the month and £50 for rep of the year). We also run our Student Choice Awards every June, where reps could win an 'Academic Network Team of the Year' award, or a 'Wellbeing Network Team of the Year' award.

What should I do if I can't attend a meeting or training session?

Whilst reps should do their best to attend all their meetings and training, we understand that occasionally this may not be possible. In this case, let the person who sent you the invitation know that you can't make it as far in advance as possible. For meetings, make sure that your feedback is being picked up by someone else – you could either brief another rep who is attending the meeting, or ask someone else to attend on your behalf. For training, it is a good idea to contact the trainer to find out if there is a way for you to catch up so you stay fully informed.

How do I encourage students to give me feedback?

If students don't know who their rep is, they won't be able to provide feedback. After reps have been elected, they should ask their lecturers for a few minutes at the beginning or end of a lecture to introduce themselves to their cohort. Additionally, they could also ask lecturers to send round an introductory email to let students know who their rep is and how to contact them. Students will also be more inclined to share feedback if they know that something is being done with their feedback – so remember to raise it with your programme or in meetings and close the feedback loop afterwards!

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I do if I am struggling to implement a change in my programme?

If you have tried to implement a change to your programme/department/faculty, based on student feedback, but you are finding it challenging to come to a resolution, follow the guidance on the feedback flowchart to raise it at the next highest level. You can also come and ask the representation team for any advice if you are unsure.

How often should I collect feedback from students?

Year reps should encourage students to approach them with feedback whenever they have some (when appropriate – via email or beginning/after lectures). However, year reps should try and ensure they have student feedback to pass onto their department reps before any SSC/SSLG or Union meetings. Year reps should meet with their department reps before meetings, and department reps should meet with faculty reps before their meetings, so they can organise what feedback they plan to share.

How many hours should I expect to spend on my role per week?

The time commitment for all rep roles will be dependent on the number of meetings they need to attend. Year Reps should expect to attend around five meetings per academic year, whereas this number will be between eight-ten for department reps and faculty reps. Meetings typically last 1-2 hours. Work relating to rep positions should take on average no more than 2 hours a week for year reps, and no more than 4 hours a week for department and faculty reps. However, this will vary during the academic year and term by term.

Where can I find support for signposting?

If you receive any queries or feedback from students that you are not trained or expected to deal with in your role, make sure you signpost them to the relevant services. Sometimes knowing where to send them can be challenging, so if you are ever unsure on how to handle a safeguarding issue (or other representation issue) come and ask the representation team first.

Glossary of terms

Agenda
A list of items that will be discussed in a meeting, distributed to all attendees around a week prior.

AMM
Annual **M**embers' **M**eeting – A meeting that takes place every year where student representatives attend and get to have a say in the direction of how the Union runs.

AOB
Any **O**ther **B**usiness - Any additional matters that need to be discussed that haven't already been covered in the meeting. *To note – if you think you will have AOB in a meeting, it is good practice to highlight this to the meeting Chair prior to the meeting.

College President
The College's top executive with the ultimate responsibility for the College's performance. Not to be confused with the President of Imperial College Union!

Constituent Unions
Each department belongs to a constituent union that represents them, under the guidance of Imperial College Union.

Matters Arising
An opportunity for questions or updates related to items in the previous meeting to be discussed.

Meeting Chair
A person who is responsible for ensuring the meeting runs smoothly, on time and that everyone has a chance to speak.

Minutes
A summary of what was discussed at a meeting, particularly highlighting actions, and who is responsible for them.

Officer Trustee
A full-time, elected individual who takes a year out from studying, or after they graduate, to improve the student experience for all Imperial students by representing them to the College.

Papers
Documents which detail the contents of agenda items. The Chair will send round the papers for members to read prior to a meeting.

Useful contacts

Deputy President (Education)

✉ **dpeducation@imperial.ac.uk**

- A full-time student representative, elected by students, who works to improve the student voice for all students at Imperial College.
- **Contact about:** College staff, SSCs, academic feedback, advice on representation and general concerns about your role or individuals.

Deputy President (Welfare)

✉ **dpwelfare@imperial.ac.uk**

- A full-time student representative, elected by students, who works to improve the student voice for all students at Imperial College.
- **Contact about:** College staff, SSCs, wellbeing feedback, advice on signposting and safeguarding, and general concerns about your role.

Representation Team

✉ **icu.representation@imperial.ac.uk**

- Supports the Deputy President (Welfare) and Deputy President (Education), the Wellbeing Representation Network, Liberation Officers and student-led campaigns.
- **Contact about:** running campaigns, working with Liberation Officers, issues with College staff, training needs, general concerns about the role or individuals.

For PG Reps only:

- **Caroline Hargreaves** (Senior Teaching Fellow Graduate School)

✉ **caroline.hargreaves@imperial.ac.uk**

- A Senior Teaching Fellow at the Graduate School. Caroline champions postgraduate student representation and works closely with Academic & Welfare Officers and Imperial College Union.
- **Contact about:** interactions with support or academic staff, and for contacts, collaborations and cohort building.

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