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**Imperial Festival 2016**

**Evaluation Report**

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**August 2016**

**www.jenesysassociates.co.uk**

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# Introduction

## Imperial Festival 2016

Imperial Festival is an annual celebration and showcase of the accomplishments and activities of staff and students at Imperial College London. Described on the Imperial website as ‘*a weekend dedicated to sharing the best science and arts on offer from Imperial’*, the Festival has five strategic objectives:

1. To celebrate the work and community of Imperial College London
2. To make a positive contribution to Festival visitor’s learning outcomes
3. To generate a positive impression of the College among Festival visitors, staff working at the Festival; and staff/students visiting the Festival
4. To increase the impact of Imperial research
5. To influence the path of research carried out at Imperial

The fifth Imperial Festival took place on Friday 6th, Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th May 2016. Friday was a Schools Day attended by over 100 primary school children with their teachers, and on Saturday and Sunday the Festival was open to the public with an estimated 15,000 visitors[[1]](#footnote-1). The Alumni Weekend also took place on the Saturday and Sunday and was attended by over 1200[[2]](#footnote-2) Imperial alumni and guests. Imperial Festival 2016 was evaluated by Jenesys Associates Ltd and our findings are documented in this report.

## Evaluation aims

Aim 1: To assess the impacts of the Imperial Festival 2016 on:

* Members of the public, Imperial staff and students who visit the Festival
* Pupils and Teachers who visit Schools Day
* Alumni who visit the Festival and/or Alumni Weekend
* Imperial staff, students and others involved in delivery of the Festival
* Festival Volunteers

Aim 2: To identify learning from the Festival including, should they arise, improvements to other Imperial College London outreach activities

## Evaluation methodology

**Visitor survey**

552 visitors to Imperial Festival 2016 provided valid responses to an online survey. The survey was publicised after the Festival via the website and social media feeds and a team of volunteers collected responses to a shortened set of questions offline during the Festival. The survey questions were branched according to demographic and background information, so that only appropriate questions were asked to each category of visitor. There was a simplified set of questions for respondents aged under-12 and additional questions about the Alumni Weekend for alumni who attended the activities. The total number of respondents include 101 who completed the shorter offline version during the Festival, 68 Alumni who answered the Alumni Weekend questions and 16 who answered simplified questions for respondents who were age less than 12.

Schools Day questionnaires

137 pupils and 14 teachers completed hard copy questionnaires after they had visited a structured programme of activities on Festival Schools Day.

Participants’ surveys

135 staff, students and others who had delivered activities at the Festival provided responses to a ‘researchers’ e-survey.   
126 Festival Volunteers provided responses to a ‘volunteers’ e-survey.  
13 support staff (e.g. security, catering) provided responses to a ‘support staff’ e-survey.

In-Festival visitor interviews

Short face-to-face interviews were conducted with the following visitor groups during the Festival:  
19 x families  
6 x couples  
9 x groups of friends (mostly age under 30)  
3 x individual visitors

Post-Festival Interviews

10 visitors and 10 participants were interviewed by phone between 6 and 9 weeks after the Festival to explore themes that were emerging from the survey responses in greater depth and to obtain longer-term reflections about their experiences and, where relevant, the impacts of previous Imperial Festivals.

Data collection and analysis

All data were obtained in confidence and contributors were assured that their feedback would be reported anonymously. Survey data were collected online via the website and social media using Qualtrics survey software and offline during the festival using SurveyGizmo software. Notes were taken of all interviews. The answers to open survey questions and interview feedback were coded reviewed to identify themes and interesting quotes. Visitors’ quotes are shown in blue, quotes about Alumni Weekend are in orange, activity providers’ quotes are in red*,* volunteers’ and support staff quotes are ingreen*.*

Reporting

All data in this report have been anonymised. Survey respondents were not forced to answer all questions and some only partially completed the surveys. In some cases, whether or not they answered some questions was dependent on responses to earlier questions. Therefore sample sizes differ and this report shows the number of respondents (n=) for every graph. Percentages have been rounded and when totalled may be greater or less than 100.

Section 2 describes the demographics, backgrounds and motivations of Festival visitors, Section 3 examines their feedback and Section 4 records the Festival’s impacts on them. Section 5 and 6 outline visitor feedback about the Schools Day and Alumni Weekend respectively. Sections 7, 8 and 9 document feedback from participants, including volunteers and support staff. Section 10 presents the conclusions from the evaluation.

# Who visited Imperial Festival 2016?

This section documents demographics, reasons for attending and areas visited for all types of visitors, plus previous experience of Imperial and interest in science for public visitors.

## Visitor demographics

Visitor age groups and gender

Age and gender data were collected from a total of 552 visitors. 6% (33) were age under 18. 45% (248) were age 18 to 34, which covers the Festival’s priority social media target demographic of London-based 18 to 30 year olds without children. 25 to 34 was the most common age group at 22% (121). Observations suggest these figures underrepresent the proportion of young children who visited the Festival, as families with pre-teenage children were the most commonly observed visitor group. This can be attributed to the fact that the methods used to promote the survey would have targeted older age groups. Alumni were on average older than the whole cohort, with 59% reporting that they were 45 or above, compared to 34% for the whole sample.

Visitor ages (n=549)

Overall, visitors’ gender was fairly evenly split, with 47% (259) being female and 52% (287) being male and 1% (6) preferring not to say. Most (70%) alumni who reported their gender were male.

***Previous visits to Imperial Festival***

469 respondents answered when asked if they had visited Imperial Festival before 2016. 67% (314) had not been before.

***Visitor categories***

532 respondents provided information about their visitor category. 49% (261) were members of the public, including friends and family of current (10%, 53) or former (5%, 26) Imperial staff or students meaning and 5% (26) age under 12, meaning 29% (154) were age 12 or over with no connection to Imperial. 19% (101) of the total were alumni and 29% (154) were current Imperial staff or students. Alumni who had registered for Alumni Weekend were emailed directly about the survey, which may have resulted in a higher proportion of respondents from this category. 38% of visitors in the 18 to 34 age group were Imperial students, 14% were Imperial alumni and 20% of this age group have no connection to Imperial.

**Visitor categories (n=532**)

Composition of Visitor Groups

459 respondents age 12 or over identified their visitor groups. The most common answer was family, which was reported by 30% (137) of respondents, with a further 13% (60) coming in mixed groups of adults and children. However, observations suggested that most visitor groups included children. Most of those who selected ‘other’ described themselves as members of an Instagrammers group.

Visitor Groups (n=459)

Visitors’ home locations

410 visitors age 12 and over provided their home postcode, if in the UK, or home country, if outside the UK. 48% (197) were located within London postcode boundaries. In 2015, 60% of visitors had London postcodes, which may be an indication that the Festival is extending its geographic reach. In total, 80% (328) live in South East England, including London. 14% (57) live elsewhere in the UK and 6% (25) live overseas.

All visitors who were interviewed during the Festival lived in London and surrounding areas.

Visitors home location (n= 410)

## How visitors hear about Imperial Festival

532 visitors age 12 or over selected from a list of 14 options the ways they heard about Imperial Festival, with a number selecting more than one option. As shown in the graph overleaf, the most common answer, chosen by 40% (210) of respondents, was an email from Imperial, which included the alumni e-bulletin, events mail and staff briefing. For the first time, social media options (33%, 176) exceeded word of mouth (29%, 153). The breakdown of social media options was:

Facebook 15% of respondents, 82

Twitter 9%, 50

Instagram 4%, 20

Linkedin 1%, 7

Other social media 3%, 17

The findings suggest that proactive, targeted direct contact through email and social media or word of mouth referrals are important promotional channels for Imperial Festival, with advertising being less significant. Respondents who selected ‘other’ were asked to describe how they heard about Imperial Festival. The most common descriptions can be categorised as Instagrammers London, Eventbrite, walking past the Festival and via teachers/schools.

**How visitors heard about Imperial Festival (n=532)**

Visitors interviewed during the Festival named a number of ways in which they found out about Imperial Festival, with TimeOut, The Londonist and passing by being the most common. One group had seen an Underground poster when already on their way to the Festival. Other forms of publicity that were were mentioned were: mailing lists for London; Facebook (related to Big Bang); Ian Visits website (listings for events that are a bit different); being told by friends, including people who work at Imperial and alumni; Google search for things to do this weekend; and picking up a leaflet about public engagement at Imperial.

## Background of public visitors

Previous experience of Imperial

Public visitors age 12 and over, i.e. those with no connection to Imperial or who are friends and family of current or former Imperial staff or students, were asked if they had ever visited Imperial College London before Imperial Festival 2016. 255 responded to this question, of which 55% (139) had not previously visited Imperial.

102 respondents who had visited previously explained the reason(s) for their visits from a list of 6 options. 24% (24) had been to another Imperial Festival and 6% (6) had been to a Festival Fringe Event. Most of those who selected ‘other’ had been for specific reason such as an exam, short course, museum tour or an event for children, e.g. mini-engineers, CREST event. 60% of public visitors in the 18 to 34 age group had not been to Imperial before.

Public visitors’ reasons for previous visit to Imperial (n =102)

Most of the interviewed visitor groups were first-time visitors, although three families were previous visitors who said they now see Imperial Festival as an annual family event.

Interest in science

218 public visitors in all age groups, including age under 12, answered when asked about their existing interest in science. As shown overleaf, 93% (202) indicated that they love or like it, suggesting that Imperial Festival attracts an audience with an existing interest in science. All but one of the respondents who reported that they were neutral or disliked science were age 12 or over. 95% of public visitors in the 18 to 34 age group love or like science.

Almost all visitors who were interviewed during the Festival did not have a formal science background. The exceptions were a science teacher and an engineer. All said at least one member of their visitor group was interested in or liked science.

Interest in science (n=218)

## Reasons for visiting Imperial Festival

The main reason for visiting Imperial Festival expressed by family and adult groups was to have an enjoyable day out. This included visitors who have visited more than one Festival and first-time visitors.

Fun and engaging - a great thing to do on a sunny weekend and definitely not just for science buffs. The live music also added extra atmosphere to the event. (Imperial staff)

I came because I have enjoyed it on previous occasions! (Public visitor)

The Facebook page made it seem like a really good experience. Nice day out with friends. (Public visitor)

A brilliant day out and a fantastic way to immerse oneself in a wide range of science presented in a very accessible, interesting and user friendly way. (Public visitor)

Visitors with young children reported that they come to Imperial Festival for a family day out and anticipated that their children would be entertained and enthused by the science that was on show.

I bought my grandson along as I thought he would really enjoy it, he loves learning and loves science and cars. (Imperial staff)

Mostly for my young kids - a lovely day out in London that can augment their fascination with science. (Public visitor)

We were at the last one and it was so good we've been waiting for the next one. I have two boys ages 12 and 9 and it is a perfect day out as they love science and I want them to be inspired by the vast array of ideas that are on show. (Public visitor)

Visitors with older children, i.e. teenagers, said they were attracted by the opportunity for their children to experience inspiring science and higher education options at first hand.

I come with my teenage son, who can try out different disciplines and see what appeals. It's entertaining but doesn't shy away from hard science, or water it down to a level those of us who aren't scientists can cope with! It's reasonably local. It's free. (Public visitor)

I wanted to show my children what imperial college does and is for. They will be going to university in a few years’ time and this gives them great insight on careers and what they can choose. (Imperial staff)

Expose 6th form daughter and family friends with a 6th former to the college and work after a science or medicine degree. (Alumnus)

Alumni and Imperial staff and students said they wanted to find out about the current research and work of Imperial and, in some cases, share that experience with their families or friends.

For me it is a great way to engage my child in STEM subjects and show them what a wide range of opportunities there are within these fields. It is fun and inspiring for her and I also like to see the different areas of research at the college. (Alumnus)

To see what is currently active in research and check out possible new inventions. (Imperial student)

…to see some of the research areas in which Imperial is engaged, and to talk directly with those involved. (Imperial staff)

Many adult public visitors were generally curious about Imperial or science.

To explore more about what Imperial has to offer for science and to see learn something from the festival. I have never been to Imperial before so I also wanted to see how the University was and it's atmosphere. (Public visitor)

*Curious about engineering / applied science generally. \Something to do (sunny day, pleasant walk across Hyde Park). (Public visitor)*

A number of alumni who registered for Alumni Weekend reported that they were coming to connect with other alumni and some alumni who only came to the Festival indicated that they use the Festival to show their family and friends where they studied.

Interviews l confirmed the survey findings, with reasons for visiting varying. They included meeting up as a group of friends and wanting something to do for young adults, having a family day out with something for all ages for family groups, being on the way to the museums and stopping at the Festival for all types of visitor groups. One couple had been to the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition a few years before and came to the Festival as they thought it sounded similar, which suggests an opportunity for cross-promotion.

## Visitors’ engagement with Imperial Festival 2016

393 visitors age 12 and over selected the Zones or activities they had visited at Imperial Festival, with almost all choosing more than one option. The most common answer was the Research Zone which was visited by 76% (298). Zones or activities that were remote from the Research Zone or Festival main entrance such as ‘Transport Zone’, ‘Robot Zone’ and ‘Superbug Zone’ were visited by 49% (193), 46% (181) and 36% (143) of respondents respectively, suggesting that some visitors moved around the whole site. Most respondents who answered ‘other’ were Alumni who described activities that were part of the Alumni Weekend, such as events in Beit Quad and Queen’s Tower Tours. Members of the public who chose ‘other’ described Talkaoke, the bar and Sensorium.

Visitors’ experiences of Imperial Festival Zones and activities (n=393)

Although interviews during the Festival took place throughout the site, a majority of the groups had been in the Research Zone and surrounding Zones. No one had visited all the Zones. All said they were unlikely to visit every Zone or come on both days. Family groups said it would take too long to visit every Zone with children. Most adult visitors said they would just wander around what they came across and that it all seemed interesting.

Only those who were interviewed in the Transport Zone had been to the Transport Zone. Some of these were not aware of the rest of the Festival until interviewed. This feedback suggests that visitors did not automatically connect the Transport Zone with the whole Festival.

Some family groups had been to Superbug, Health and Robot Zones. They very much enjoyed Superbug and Health and said these had a nice atmosphere and they were able to talk to lots of students and staff, but had not enjoyed the Robot Zone as it was too busy. Two groups had left the Robot Zone because overcrowding meant it was difficult to see or engage with displays.

None of the interviewees had planned their visit using the online programme, although some had seen it.

Families who had been to the Festival before welcomed the addition of new Zones, which meant the Research Zone was less overcrowded, and the staggered entry to busy areas like the Reach Out Lab, which gave their children time to learn and engage deeply with Imperial staff and students. There were a number of suggestions that the queues which resulted from staggered entry to the Reach Out Lab would have benefited from shade, entertainment and a clear explanation of what visitors would see inside.

Many interviewees commented on the good weather aiding the atmosphere and some wondered what would happen if it rained i.e. would more Zones become overcrowded?

No interviewees had been to any talks and most were not sure who they were aimed at, e.g. specific ages, non-experts, people with some knowledge, experts etc. Some visitors who were interviewed after the Festival had not been to talks in 2016, but had been to at least one talk in previous Festivals. They commented positively on the suitability and engaging nature of some talks for teenagers and suggested that this suitability should be given greater emphasis in Festival information.

One individual had been on a Tour of the composting facility and commented that most people on this tour were lone visitors or couples ‘unlike the majority of visitors who seem to be families’.

# What did visitors think of Imperial Festival 2016?

This section reports visitors’ opinions of their experiences and their suggestions for Festival organisers.

## Visitors’ overall rating

498 visitors age 12 and over rated their overall opinion of the Festival. A majority rated it highly, with 89% (443) selecting ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’. 91% of visitors in the 18 to 34 age group rated the Festival above average, 6% of this age group rated it as average and 3% as poor.

Visitors age 12 and over rating of Imperial Festival 2016 (n=498)

Visitors age under 12 also rated the Festival positively, with all but one rating it above average.

Visitors age under 12 rating of Imperial Festival 2016 (n=16)

The main explanations for visitors age 12 and over rating Imperial Festival as excellent were the enthusiasm and communication skills of those who were presenting activities and the wide variety of science that was covered.

Inspired by the articulation and enthusiasm of the researchers and their willingness to listen and explain. I learnt a lot and will pass this onto my grandchildren who weren't able to attend but I hope they will next year. (Public visitor)

I love the enthusiasm of the demonstrators and volunteers, this really comes across and helps enthuse the general public and especially children. Well done all! (Alumnus)

The wide variety of presentations and activities, and the passionate, helpful staff and students, who were available to engage and explain their research. (Public visitor)

A whole range of science to explore all within 1 campus. (Public visitor)

Scale of event is impressive. Wide spectrum of demos. (Imperial student)

These reasons were also described by visitors who rated the Festival as good. Most of this group explained that they did not give an excellent rating because of long queues or overcrowding or because signage and directions could be clearer.

Only reason it isn't an excellent is it was too crowded at certain points of the evening and the talk location was not well signposted. (Public visitor)

The best exhibits are located in the smallest rooms which doesn't make much sense. As such, it is overcrowded where all the good projects are located. (Public visitor)

Very interesting although we did get lost as the signs weren't super clear. (Public visitor)

I would rate it excellent but there are so many people there that it was hard to see everything and allow my kids to be interactive with all the cool things there. (Alumnus)

I really wanted to visit an area to do with spacecraft and aeronautics but I didn't know where it would be (the zones were quite vague and there was no specific information). (Imperial staff)

Overcrowding and poor signage were the main explanations given by visitors who rated the Festival as average, poor or very poor. Alumni who gave these ratings also expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of Alumni Weekend, which are covered in Section 6. Public visitors who gave these ratings were unhappy with the overcrowding and congested layout in some Zones. There were also one-off criticisms of accessibility in some areas, explanations given in some demonstrations, the fact that not all Zones were open for the alumni preview and the programme of talks being less interesting on Sunday than Saturday.

## Visitor favourite parts of Imperial Festival

The visitor survey asked respondents in all age groups to name their favourite part of Imperial Festival. Most visitors who were age under 12 said the Robot Zone was their favourite part. Adults who visited with children highlighted the Explore Zone as being particularly appealing to their children.

Feedback from visitors age 12 and over about their favourite part of the Festival highlighted six areas or aspects, which in order of popularity were:

First Research Zone

Second Energy & Environment Zone

= Third Superbug Zone, Robot Zone, Tours

= Sixth Talks, All areas

In some cases, respondents explained their choices. Many of the explanations for choosing specific Zones were the same as those for positive overall ratings of the Festival covered in section 3.3, particularly the enthusiasm of staff and students. Also highlighted were the interactive and accessible nature of displays and everyday relevance of subject matter.

Both the energy & environment and superbug zones were excellent. They were staffed by highly enthusiastic demonstrators and imaginatively displayed in a way that was accessible to everyone. The subject matter is also of direct relevance to all of us. (Public visitor)

Research zone. Good selection of topics and areas of research -esp bioengineering. Very clear demos, good explanations, researchers enthusiastic and able to explain well. (Alumnus)

The Research Tent, as it showed off and enabled hands-on so many different areas of science at Imperial. (Public visitors)

*I thought the superbug zone was awesome. My kids really enjoyed it as well. There was lots of interaction for the kids and the staff/store people were fantastic. I learnt a few things about superbugs myself! (Imperial staff)*

The Energy and Environment Zone. The information given was clear and concise, didn't feel like it was particularly 'tailored' to any age or level (of knowledge). Most 'accessible' part in my opinion. (Public visitor)

Visitors who chose talks or tours as their favourite part highlighted the knowledge and skills of tour leaders and presenters.

Probably the planetarium tour because of the amazing passion and knowledge demonstrated by the student doing the narration. (Public visitor)

The Carbon Capture Pilot Plant tour because the tour guides were both very enthusiastic and this made the tour memorable. (Public visitor)

The talks. Interesting, informative, wasn't talked down to. (Public visitor)

Visitors also described general aspects of the Festival as their favourite parts, particularly the atmosphere and opportunities to interact with researchers (for adults), or hands-on experiments (for children).

## Visitor experiences

The post-Festival version of the survey for visitors age 12 and over asked respondents to rate specific aspects of Imperial Festival information and communication.

Programmes and navigation

71% (273) of respondents rated the Printed Programme as excellent or good. The Programme was produced in a new format this year and the equivalent figure was 85% in 2015. 13% of respondents selected don’t know, suggesting that they had not used the Printed Programme.

62% (234) respondents rated the Online interactive Programme, suggesting that they had used it. Fewer than half 46% (174) rated it above average.

79% (303) rated the ease of finding their way around the Festival as excellent or good indicating that a majority found the site and layout easy to navigate. Despite this response, improvements to signage and directions was one of the most common visitor suggestions, as covered in section 3.4 below.

Visitor ratings of Festival programmes and ease of navigation (n=378 to 384)

Interview and survey feedback suggested that the Printed Programme could have been more detailed, particularly with regard to locations of specific features and activities.

The printed programme did not give enough information as to what was going on. For example the timing of the tours and how to take part in one was unclear. (Public visitor)

The Programme map was not accurate and some staff and volunteers did not know how to interpret it, which led to confusion. (Public visitor)

I don't think the printed program was thorough enough to explain the What and the Where, as we spent some time wondering around, hoping to find our way to a particular exhibition. We have to be better prepared next year. (Imperial student)

Most interview subjects had not managed to find an online programme or felt that it was not useful as a tool to help plan their visits.

I looked online before the Festival but couldn’t find a programme as such. I wanted something that would help us plan our day by telling us which age groups particular events were for. (Public visitor)

You need to improve the online information for the chance to plan the visit in order to get more completed. Admittedly this may be a challenge based on some events changing shape over the preceding days, but there are online planning tools out there that you could use. (Public visitor)

Online programme was nothing more than selecting activities i was interested in. List was too long to go through and wasn't organised into a 'programme' with timings and locations easy to find. (Public visitor)

It is worth noting that, as mentioned in 3.1 above, one of the most common reasons for not rating the Festival highly was difficulty in locating some activities or areas. In interview visitors said they appreciated having a map and signs but that they still found it difficult to locate some activities.

A pop-up planetarium was advertised, but we never found it and nobody that we asked knew where it was. You need to give more help to find things. (Public visitor)

The majority of signage was good in the main parts but we got a bit lost trying to get to the transport zone. (Public visitor)

Interaction with Imperial staff and students

Visitors reported that Imperial staff and students provided clear explanations about their work, with 91% (348) rating these as excellent or good. Staff and student responses to visitors’ questions were also highly rated, with 90% (344) rating them as excellent or good.

Visitor ratings of their interaction with Imperial staff and students (n=382)

Interview and survey feedback reported that in a majority of cases staff and students were extremely sucessful in their interactions with visitors. However there were some indications that the quality of interactions could be uneven.

*I thought that the quality of the explanations was quite varied. Some researchers didn't seem to have a clear idea of how to speak proactively to the public about their research*. (Imperial staff)

All students presenting their work were enthusiastic and proactive, particularly in engaging my grandson's interest. (Alumnus)

High standard of expertise and knowledge on display but at times exhibitors could have better explained the mechanics of concepts to a non-scientific audience (Public visitor)

The overall majority of students were amazing and show interest in explaining thier work, answer questions and get (kinda of feedback). There is only one case where one of the students didn't seem to be interested in speaking with people who are passionate about his area of work. (Public visitor)

Visitors who were interviewed during and after the Festival provided positive general feedback on their interaction with researchers at the 2016 and previous Festivals, they highlighted instances when Imperial staff and students were proactive and welcomed them with a statement or story that was appropriate to the ages of their visitor group, or sought to ascertain their background knowledge or interest and communicated at an appropriate level, or where researchers smiled or greeted visitors when they approached stands.

Some visitors found they could not speak to all the researchers they wanted to this year due to excessive crowds (gravitational waves and robotics were particularly noted), but when they did find space to talk to researchers, visitors were complimentary about their experiences. There were several suggestions that researchers could be given training in closing conversations, in order to move visitor groups on. It was also noticed that many of the opening pitches or first contacts with stands were aimed at children, e.g. handing out sweets and stickers, which meant some adult visitors could be deterred from stopping.

Interviewees had noticed large numbers of volunteers and those who interacted with volunteers were complimentary. However, there were also some suggestions that volunteers could have been more knowledgeable about the location of specific stands or exhibits and more proactive in providing visitor information, e.g. some groups had been handed maps and others had not but had seen other visitors with them, some adult groups queued for activities in the ReachOut Lab, which they felt were aimed at children and said volunteers could have provided information about what they would see or suggested other more appropriate locations for their group.

Interviwees generally thought that the event was well-organised. The volunteers were mostly thought be helpful and the map (once visitors had worked it out) was deemed useful. Toilets and baby changing facilities were perhaps the hardest things to find and it was suggested that it would be better to have some sited near the main entrance to make them easier to locate.

## Visitor suggestions

In interviews and survey responses the most common suggestions from visitors to improve Imperial Festival can be summarised as:

* Improve spatial organisation within Zones, to minimise overcrowding, and across the whole site, to ensure spaces flow into one another and that the Zones with greatest appeal are situated in the largest and most central spaces.
* Improve directions and signposting, including physical sign-posts, maps and programme information to enable visitors of all ages and backgrounds to identify and find the activities that are most likely to appeal to them.
* Ensure there are sufficient activities that are relevant to teenagers and adults and that these activities are visible and identifiable within the whole programme.

Suggestions about spatial organisation referred to the close proximity of some stands within individual Zones, particularly the Robot Zone, and the use or non-use of spaces between Zones.

Sometimes less is more, there were too many exhibits for the space in the Robot Zone and we struggled to engage properly with anything. You really don’t need to cram everything in every year. Maybe less stands on rotation but still with lots of explainers would be a better way to go. (Public visitor)

Space permitting, the stalls should be further apart, as it can get very noisy when many voices overlap. Many museums have a small corner, where some presentation in the film format is going on, repeating itself … this would permit batches of 40 / 60 people watching [the film] prior to visiting the stalls. (Public visitor)

At some points there were bare areas like when you came through the car zone where there was nothing but some seats. Other areas were really busy with long queues. Could you use some of the empty spaces to distribute people more evenly? (Public visitor)

Choose locations better. Think about exhibits that will be most popular and put them in the biggest area – you could have had robots in the main marquee. Make full use of all the space that is available. Think about where people will have to queue and provide activities to entertain them. (Public visitor)

Suggestions about directions and signposting referred to physical materials and the provision of information or scheduling that allows visitors to plan their visits or identify specific stands or activities, including those that are more relevant to particular age groups. The main suggestions were colour coding activities for different ages, producing age-group guides and timetabling activities when they are most likely to appeal to particular ages.

You need better navigation for visitors and better signage including human signage throughout. There are many green shirted helpers, perhaps you could have some in red shirts who act as human signposts and know where everything is. They could be proactive and suggest particular spaces that are quieter or most suited to a particular group of visitors. We found the [Contemplation Zone] by accident but having a human signpost who could have asked are you looking for somewhere quiet would have been brilliant. (Public visitor)

Improve the detail in the online information and printed programme for the chance to plan the visit in order to get more out of it. What about having pages in the programme grouped into things to do with young kids, things to do with teenagers, things to do with adults? (Public visitor)

You need to think about when people do things. When my kids were younger – they are now 11 and 13 – we were up out and leaving mid-afternoon. Teenagers are late morning onwards. Adults like afternoons and evening, you could offer a museum lates style opening for adults to reduce the numbers coming early in the day. It would mean later opening times, of course. (Public visitor)

Imperial students, alumni and public visitors, including some with teenage children, suggested that the Festival should offer more that is aimed at people age 12 and over or at least make such elements of the programme easier to identify and access.

You need more activities aimed at the student age group if you want to attract us. Holding it at exam time doesn’t help, but I think more students would come if they didn’t think it was just for kids. (Imperial student)

My children are now at secondary school and would appreciate not just learning and experiencing science but also finding out about student life. Couldn’t there be a Student Life Zone where they could not only talk to students about their subjects but also ask more general questions about university? (Public visitor)

Very young children are too young to appreciate the scientific level of some of the work that is on display. It’s a bit like not seeing the wood for the trees. The young child-friendly stuff is much more obvious. The other stuff like some higher level stands or talks are there but is not obviously signposted or made clear it is hard to see that wood for the trees. Couldn’t the programme have a sections that list things to do for adults and teenagers? (Public visitor)

In interviews, visitors expanded on some of these suggestions and identified a number of opportunities:

1. The Contemplation Zone could be expanded to encompass an adult public programme if this is one of the future aims of the Festival. Timings, including evening opening, could be considered to appeal to adults. The Contemplation Zone was quiet, but when those who visited it were interested they stayed for 20 mins or more and appreciated having the quieter space. The students running this Zone suggested having something in the programme to encourage people to come to see them. Visitors suggested having some refreshments to help make this Zone more of a destination.
2. Most visitors thought Imperial Festival was an Open-Day type event, which may be because it is located at a University. Those with teenage children felt that they would have benefitted from more interaction with undergraduate students about student life and studying at Imperial. Some also said that Imperial could have follow-up activities for prospective students to keep them engaged.
3. Most visitors, including adults-only groups, saw the Festival as predominantly being an event for families and they thought it appeared to work well for that audience. Some adults who came without children struggled to find enough to do, or felt limited to the talks. One commented that stands were ‘surrounded by a sea of children and adults were on the periphery’. They suggested that the content of each stand should include something for adults and that researchers should be trained to engage actively with adults as well as children. All interviewees felt the programme and Festival website could benefit from more detail about which ages particular events and activities were aimed at or best suited to.
4. Age-targeted programming could be spread throughout the day, with activities aimed at particular age groups scheduled accordingly, e.g. events for teenagers and adults held later in the day than those for young children.
5. The most popular Zones were those located in the centre of the site. As most families with young children are only likely to visit a few Zones, it may be better to locate those that are likely to appeal to them (e.g. Robot and Superbug) in the centre, with Zones that are most appealing to adults in the quieter areas, but well-signposted.

Interviews with visitors also elicited some very specific suggestions:

* Make better use of transition areas e.g. courtyard behind Transport Zone, walkway to Superbug Zone to link all areas of the Festival together
* Place taster activities for different age groups along the main entrance walkway (Imperial College Road) to engage and signpost visitors from the moment they arrive
* Use a PA system if you want all visitors to hear the opening speech
* Some talks fill-up before the start time – use a bigger venue or repeat popular talks
* Give more information about the rest of the Festival in the Transport Zone
* Allocate more space for Robots and Superbug Zones
* Re-think images used in marketing to attract non-family and more diverse audiences

Evaluator observations noted that the Festival audience is quite homogenous. Diversifying the audience is not presently a specific aim of the Festival and if it became so would require specific, targeted promotional interventions to make the audience increasingly diverse.

# What impacts did Imperial Festival 2016 have on visitors?

The section analyses Imperial Festival’s impacts on visitors, including learning and how the Festival makes visitors feel about Imperial.

## Intended outcomes for Festival visitors

Survey respondents age 12 and over reported impacts in five areas based on the Festival’s published desired outcomes for visitors. Visitors aged under 12 were also asked about their learning.

The greatest impact was *I learned something new,* with 92% (439) of respondents age 12 and over strongly agreeing or agreeing that the Festival had this impact and 9 of 13 respondents age under 12 answering yes when asked if they learned something new at Imperial Festival.

Respondents reported that the Festival had positive impacts in all other desired areas. 90% (432) strongly agreed or agreed that it *increased my understanding of the work/research carried out at Imperial,* suggesting that Imperial Festival is an effective pubic engagement activity.

78% (370) strongly agreed or agreed that the Festival *developed my interest in science.* It is worth noting that 93% of public visitors reported that they already like or love science, indicating that this outcome was achieved even for visitors with an existing interest.

69% (331) and 63% (300) strongly agreed or agreed respectively that Imperial Festival had *increased my knowledge of Imperial activities that are available to the public* and *made me want to find out more about Imperial*, suggesting that there is scope for the Festival to give greater focus to achieving these aims if they are deemed to be important.

**Visitor impacts of Imperial Festival 2016 (n= 475 to 480)**

## Visitor attitudes towards Imperial College London

To assess the Festival’s progress against its aim to *generate a positive impression of the College,* visitors age 12 and over were asked how Imperial Festival makes them feel about Imperial College London.

Almost all visitors with a connection to Imperial, such as current staff or students, former staff and alumni described positive feelings. Most commonly, they reported feelings of pride engendered by the Festival. They also described how they learned more about the breadth and applied nature of Imperial’s current research. The exceptions were three visitors, who were uncertain about the purpose of the Festival and said it had no impact of this type, and one alumnus who felt it was a missed opportunity to engage with them.

I now see Imperial more as a community and less as a loose grouping of diverging interests and abilities. (Imperial staff)

A lot of: innovation, interdisciplinary research, applied research to resolve important problems and environmental challenges, engagement with schools and young talents. (Imperial staff)

Through attending Imperial Festival, I understand there are lots of research work happening, much more than I knew before. I also found out many of the research studies are highly related to people daily life! (Imperial student)

Imperial College London is a world-class university. Full of advance research and excellent students. (Alumnus)

Many visitors of secondary school age indicated that the Festival had inspired them to want to study at Imperial.

It inspired me to apply for the university and feel less stressed because the atmosphere during the festival and going around the college was calm and positive. The festival truly reflected what Imperial has to offer for science and I am sure there is even more than there was seen in the festival. The people there were friendly including the staff/lecturers. (Public visitor)

It is somewhere I would definitely like to go to for university-the diversity of research and the overall vibe was really friendly and welcoming. (Public visitor)

The Imperial Festival makes me feel that Imperial has both useful and exciting research and developments, and if I achieve the entry standards would consider Imperial as a University choice. (Public visitor)

Other public visitors were overwhelmingly positive when describing how the Festival made them feel about Imperial. They highlighted the high quality and applied nature of the research on display and Imperial’s perceived willingness to engage the public.

Centre of Excellence with an outward looking vibe. Not stuffy just really really clever. (Public visitor)

I didn't know much about Imperial College before attending this festival. I always thought that MIT is the pioneer in research but I find out that there are other colleges like Imperial which is not less than MIT in terms of research :) (Public visitor)

It made me feel that it isn't just for students and staff at the highest levels of research and study, I realized that there might be talks and activities that I could feel included in as someone with a very basic understanding and non-scientific training but a fascination with many aspects of science. (Public visitor)

It makes Imperial College seem like a very altruistic institution, which not only cares about its research but also about engaging with the public, and all for free! (Public visitor)

The festival made me feel that imperial college are commited and passionate to not only their research but also the world around them. (Public visitor)

In interview, visitors said the Festival created a positive impression of Imperial as it was a great day out and well organised. One visitor mentioned how Imperial was a good ‘brand’ and another , who works at Imperial, felt there is a change in Imperial’s attitudes to public engagement and that the organisation is making a visible effort to get people in through the gates. One another impact reported by visitors who had visited more than one Festival was establishing Imperial as a place they now visit annually.

## Visitors’ future intentions

98% (468) of visitors age 12 and over selected yes or maybe when asked if they would come to another Imperial Festival, suggesting that they would visit in future years. Using the same criteria, 98% (466) indicated their intention to come another Imperial public event and 99% (471) would recommend Imperial Festival.

**Visitors intentions about Imperial Festival (n=475 to 478)**

Visitors’ explanations for not recommending or not wanting to visit the Festival or another public event in the future were consistent with explanations for poor overall ratings and suggestions as discussed in sections 3.1 and 3.3, with the main reason being overcrowding, especially in some areas.

Visitors who said they would recommend Imperial Festival to others reported that they would be most likely to recommend it to friends and families. Some mentioned specific groups including children who are entering secondary school or of secondary school age and anyone interested in science.

Everyone! Especially school groups and parents with children who have an interest in science as it will be a great event to show them where their interests and passions will take them in the future. (Imperial staff)

Young people who are interested in science and don't get to see and understand the importance of science as it is not observed everyday. (Imperial student)

Anyone interested in pursuing a career in science (especially families with young children or teenagers living close to the London, or even further afield). (Alumnus)

Anyone who wants to know about research into diseases. School children who have interest in science or interested in studying science at university. (Public visitor)

Mostly to my friends who are studying science, but also to families with small children, to get them interested in science. (Public visitor)

## Visitors’ understanding of the aims of Imperial Festival

In order to explore visitors’ understanding of Imperial Festival’s aims and desired impacts, interviews with visitors asked them what they thought the aims of the Festival were and to reflect about the impacts it had on them.

Most families and some groups of adults saw the Festival as something Imperial does to advertise courses to young people. Some were confused about the aims as they knew it was not an Open Day, but thought it had an Open Day feel to parts of it. Generally, all were not clear about the specific aims of the Festival and some families with pre-teenage children had not even thought about it having aims.

Most families with teenagers were seeking information about undergraduate courses and studying at Imperial, which some had not found. Some of these parents said their children’s experiences of the Festival were still positive and that they had met students who were able to talk about their own courses. Most of this group had gleaned enough information about research and courses to discuss with their children.

Two groups of adult friends (approx. mid 20s) felt they had ‘come to the wrong place’ as they thought the Festival was for families with young children or for Imperial to ‘sell’ their courses to prospective students. One group said they were unlikely to visit the Festival again. However, the majority of those interviewed said they would visit again. Some groups of adults and one lone visitor noted that it was obvious to see the activities for children and that they would probably only come in the future if content for adults was equally obvious.

Fewer than half the adults in family groups said the Festival provided something specifically targeted at them as well as their children. However, all the adults in family groups said they learned something and several said they enjoyed seeing useful applications of science. Some adults enthusiastically recounted some of the information they had learnt.

# What did teachers and pupils think of Schools Day 2016?

This section presents feedback from primary school pupils and teachers who participated in a structured programme of activities on Friday 6th May 2016.

## Pupil demographics

53% (73) of the pupils who visited Schools Day were female and 47% (64) were male. They ranged in age from 9 to 11, suggesting they were at the upper end of Key Stage 2 (school years 5 to 6). 46% (63) were age nine and 52% (71) were age 10.

## Pupil feedback

Pupils were asked a series of questions to determine their opinions and the impacts that Schools Day had on them. Pupils responded positively to Schools Day with 96% (131), 88% (120) and 94% (126) respectively answering yes in response to these questions:

*Did you enjoy visiting Imperial today?*

*Would you like to visit Imperial again?*

*Did you learn something new today?*

Pupil response to Schools Day n=134 to 137

83% (111) of pupils said they were *more interested in science after today,* with the remainder reporting that their visit to Imperial had resulted in no change to their interest in science.

129 pupils described something they had learnt at Schools Day, with some describing more than one topic. The most common answers were something to do with the human body, including hearing, bone density and how the heart works. Other common descriptions were how to make jelly worms and the composition of food (e.g. fats, sugars). The fourth most common description can be summarised as learning a new way of thinking about science.

I learned that science is actually about having fun and not just school. (Pupil)

Science isn’t just a school subject. You can also learn about you. (Pupil)

I learnt that science is enjoyable and not magic. (Pupil)

Pupils were also asked to write a word describing how visiting Imperial made them feel. There were 134 answers and all were positive. The following table shows all words that were described by more than one pupil.

**Pupils’ feelings about Schools Day 2016**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Answer Category | Number (n=) |
| Happy (inc. very happy, so happy) | 48 |
| Interested (inc. more interested) | 27 |
| Excited (inc. very excited, more excited) | 15 |
| Good or great | 8 |
| Better | 4 |
| Confident | 3 |
| Amazed | 3 |
| Normal | 3 |
| Scientific | 2 |
| Awesome | 2 |
| Special | 2 |
| Smart | 2 |
| Proud | 2 |

The most common reasons for feeling happy were having fun followed by learning many different things.

Because I learnt more thangs than I would of imagined! ☺ (Pupil)

I learned lots of new stuff. (Pupil)

Learning new things the most common explanation for feeling interested, followed by having a positive experience of science.

I am not a fan of science, but this time I am more interested of learning new things. (Pupil)

I learned something that I never new (sic.) before and before it I didn’t like science. (Pupil)

The range of science covered and opportunity to learn new facts were the main reasons for feeling excited.

We get to do lots of fun experiments. (Pupil)

There was loads of different science and really cool stuff. (Pupil)

## Teacher feedback

Most teachers (10 of 14) had not visited Imperial College London before Imperial Festival. The remainder had visited Imperial before but had not been to the Festival. All rated their overall impression and specific aspects of Schools Day highly.

**Teachers’ ratings of Schools Day (n=14)**

Explanations for these ratings highlighted the following characteristics as success factors:

* The variety of activities for pupils
* The hands-on nature of activities
* The excitement and enthusiasm generated in pupils

Teachers’ explanations also contained some suggestions to improve Schools Day, which focused on two aspects:

* The format could be altered to allow pupils to spend longer on some of the more scientific activities
* Some presenters would benefit from training to engage this particular age group e.g. avoiding the use of jargon or overly complex terms

Teachers’ descriptions of pupil impacts indicated that Schools Day had enthused their pupils, provided a positive learning experience and inspired them to want to share their learning back at school or to study science at university.

The children will be able to go back and share with fellow students. Students can aspire to be here one day and study at university. (Teacher)

6 teachers described impacts on themselves. 3 indicated that they now know more about Imperial’s outreach work and 3 said their knowledge of the variety of subjects taught and researched by Imperial had increased.

10 teachers reported that the Schools Day has the potential to impact on their own teaching as they intend to use some of the investigations they had seen or generally include more experiments in their lessons or after school clubs.

# What did alumni think of Alumni Weekend 2016?

The section describes feedback from 68 alumni who answered questions in the Alumni Weekend section of the Imperial Festival 2016 visitor survey. 89% (61) attended both Imperial Festival and Alumni Weekend, with the remainder attending only Alumni Weekend.

## Demographics of Alumni Weekend attendees

28% (19) of respondents who attended Alumni Weekend were age 18 to 34. 28% (19) were age 35 to 54 and 44% (30) were age 55 or over, with all but one overseas alumnus who attended only Alumni Weekend being in the latter group.

Age groups of Alumni Weekend respondents (n=68)

Most respondents (72%) were male and all who attended only Alumni Weekend were male. 47% (31) of respondents have London or adjacent to London post codes, 15% (10) live in other parts of South East England, 24% (16) live elsewhere in the UK and 14% (9) are based overseas.

Subjects studied at Imperial

53 respondents who attended Alumni Weekend described the subjects that they studied at Imperial, which are presented in the table overleaf. Most alumni had studied physical sciences or engineering suggesting they were students at Imperial’s South Kensington campus which is where Imperial Festival is held.

**Alumni subjects studied at Imperial**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Subject | Number (n=) |
| Electrical Engineering/EEE | 7 |
| Mechanical Engineering | 6 |
| Computer Science | 5 |
| Medicine/Nursing | 5 |
| Biological sciences/Life sciences/Zoology | 5 |
| Management/MBA/Marketing | 4 |
| Chemical Engineering | 3 |
| Geology/Geoscience | 3 |
| Maths | 3 |
| Civil Engineering | 3 |
| Chemistry | 2 |
| Physics | 2 |
| Aeronautical Engineering | 1 |
| Innovation Design Engineering | 1 |
| Metallurgy | 1 |
| Mining | 1 |
| Waste management | 1 |

## Reasons for attending Alumni Weekend

Respondents were asked to select their 2 main reasons for attending Alumni Weekend from a list of five options, including ‘other’. The most common selection was *to reconnect with Imperial* (66%, 45), followed by *to share Imperial with my friends and/or family* which was reported by 51% (35). The most common description of ‘other’ was to inspire or interest children about science or studying at university.

**Reasons for attending Alumni Weekend 2016 (n=68)**

Milestone year activities

41% (28) of respondents reported that their graduating year ended in a ‘1’ or ‘0’. A majority of these (20) answered ‘no’ when asked if they had taken part in a milestone activity or event. The Welcome Back Breakfast and photo shoot were the most popular milestone activities.

Participation of eligible alumni in Milestone activities or events (n=68)

## Ratings of Alumni Weekend

Alumni were asked to rate their overall experience and value for money of Alumni Weekend. Those had seen the Alumni Showcase were also asked to rate this element.

Overall rating of Alumni Weekend

Most respondents (80%, 52) rated Alumni Weekend above average, indicating they had a positive experience.

Overall rating of Alumni Weekend 2016 (n=65)

Alumni who rated Alumni Weekend as excellent or good attributed their ratings to the variety of exhibits/stands and quality of students and staff interactions, as covered in Section 3 about Imperial Festival feedback. This suggests that alumni may not distinguish between the two events and include their experiences at the Festival when rating Alumni Weekend. They also mentioned the chance to meet friends and fellow former students as reasons for these ratings.

There were lots of interesting projects presented with some hands-on demonstrations. Staff and students took the time and trouble to explain things to the children. (AW attendee)

I went with my family. The entire event was well organised and had a very professional feel to it. There was lots of things to do for my young kids (face painting, goody bags etc.) and wife. We all enjoyed it so much looking forward to next year’s event. (AW attendee)

The alumni zone was excellent place to catch up with old classmates, both organised and adhoc. Really helped to engender the feeling of connection with the college. (AW attendee)

With specific exceptions who questioned the charge, who wondered if the event was purely to raise money and another who criticised the on-day registration, the main explanation for rating the Alumni Weekend as average or poor was the sign-up process and organisation for tours, followed by the event being too busy (again this probably refers to Imperial Festival).

## Alumni Showcase rating and attendance

45% (29) of respondents indicated that they had visited the Alumni Showcase, with 30% (19) saying they were not sure what this was. Most of those who had attended rated it as good (22) or excellent (4), with the remainder selecting average. Feedback from a majority of those who had seen the Showcase praised the content and presenters. There was one exception, who also rated the overall event and value for money as poor. Some respondents suggested that the Alumni Showcase could have been more visible or better advertised, which is also reflected in the fact that fewer than half of respondents were certain they had seen it.

Could have been more prominent in the common room rather than down one side furthest away from entrance. Didn't see all of the exhibitors but those seen were good. (AW attendee)

Though just one handful of them, they demonstrated how Imperial aura could change their life and career, venturing into innovation and inventions and building their new business. (AW attendee)

I did not really know what is this. Probably, people should have more info on what is the Alumni Showcase to visit it. (AW attendee)

Was this the exhibitors in the Alumni Zone? If so then I was great to see the amazing things that Alumni are doing and the innovations they are making! It was excellent to be able to speak directly to these people and share the Imperial link with them too. Bit more info / advertising about this beforehand would have been nice as completely missed it before the event. (AW attendee)

## Recommending Alumni Weekend

Alumni were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how likely they are to recommend a similar event to another alumnus, where 1 = not at all likely and 10 = very likely. The most common selection was 10 (47%, 30) and 70% (45) of respondents selected 7 or above, suggesting they were highly likely to recommend Alumni Weekend. The main explanation for not selecting 10 was wanting to be certain that large numbers of peer alumni would be present. The main reasons for selecting 5 or less were issues with the on-day registration process and tour arrangements. The respondent who selected 1 also gave an overall rating of poor.

Likelihood that alumni would recommend Alumni Weekend (n=64)

## Scheduling Alumni Weekend with Imperial Festival

Respondents were asked if they thought Alumni Weekend and Imperial Festival should be held at the same time. Given that a majority attended both events it is unsurprising that 80% (51) said yes, with 17% (11) not minding if the events are held together or separately. The two alumni who answered no rated Alumni Weekend as average overall.

Holding Alumni Weekend and Imperial Festival together (n=64)

Reasons for wanting both events to be held at the same time centred on the convenience of only having to make one trip to London and having an event that entertains and engages children and guests who accompany alumni.

Because, like me, most of the alumni do not live in London or easy reach of Imperial College. A single weekend visit to London to attend both events would be cost and time effective. Additionally, if one misses to complete the tour or meeting people in one day, it can continue the next day. (AW attendee)

I think it makes sense to have the alumni weekend at the same time as the festival so people can bring their children too and have them entertained at the many festival events. (AW attendee)

Makes a trip to Imperial all the more worthwhile, encourages greater participation. Would do it more often! (AW attendee)

## Impacts of Alumni Weekend

Alumni Weekend attendees rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the event had achieved six areas of impact. Most respondents reported that Alumni Weekend had positive impacts in all areas. The greatest impact was *it increases my sense of connection to Imperial,* with 83% (52) strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement.

82% (51) strongly agreed or agreed it *develops my sense of connection to the Imperial alumni community.*

78% (370) strongly agreed or agreed it *raises my awareness of the achievements of Imperial alumni.*

73% (45) strongly agreed or agreed it *makes me feel valued as an Imperial alumnus*.

64% (40) strongly agreed or agreed it *enables me to interact and connect with other alumni*.

73% (45) strongly agreed or agreed that *I will attend Alumni Weekend in the future*.

**Visitor impacts of Alumni Weekend 2016 (n=62)**

## Suggestions about Alumni Weekend

Respondents who had attended Alumni Weekend were asked if they had any suggestions for the organisers of this event. Most suggestions focused on the arrangements for alumni tours and were also expressed in feedback about Imperial Festival.

There were also some suggestions to help alumni identify who else from their year or course may be present and to help alumni connect with them and with other alumni generally.

Try to get more milestone alumni to attend and maybe facilitate Department Alumni meetings (rather than leave this up to individuals?) Maybe a meet up at a specific time in an old lecture room within the relevant Department could be a good draw!? (AW attendee)

BUT, the year and the dept. below [on name badges] is so small that even while sitting across the table, one cannot read it … I suggest same bold large font as the name, but can be shortened, like CIVIL 1996. (AW attendee)

Have some sort of messaging board that allows registered alumni to connect directly to each other so they can coordinate meeting times etc. without going through a third party. (AW attendee)

Miscellaneous suggestions included ensuring tea and coffee are always available in the Alumni Zone, making it easier to register guests and simplifying the on-day registration process.

## Awareness of Alumni offering and feeling of connection to Imperial

Respondents were asked about the awareness of and engagement with four services and benefits that are offered to Imperial alumni and about how connected they feel to Imperial. Awareness was highest for the online network and uptake was highest for the Alumni Visitor Centre.

Uptake of alumni services and benefits (n=61)

Feeling of connection to Imperial (n=61)

Some respondents who answered when asked if there is anything else that could be done strengthen their sense of connection said nothing. Others made some specific suggestions about holding more alumni events and providing more information about alumni services and benefits.

# Participant feedback about Imperial Festival 2016

The feedback in this section is drawn from post-Festival interview feedback and survey responses from Imperial staff, students and others who were involved in the delivery of talks, tours and workshops etc. or staffing stands or exhibits at the 2016 Festival.

## Participant backgrounds and motivations

A majority of respondents were Imperial Academic staff (39%, 53), followed by Imperial Postgraduate students (24%, 32). The ‘None of the above’ category (9%, 12) included those from Imperial-related organisations such as Imperial NHS or visiting researchers, or those who have a personal relationship with Imperial such as retired Imperial staff members or friends of Imperial students.

Activity provider categories (n=135)

Participants were asked for their main reasons for taking part in Imperial Festival. The most common responses fell into three broad themes: professional development and enjoyment; public engagement; and project development and raising awareness of their work.

Professional development and enjoyment

Participants were motivated to take part in the Festival to gain skills and experience in public engagement. Specifically they reported that the Festival provided an opportunity for them to develop their communication and organisational skills, and a chance to gain experience of talking directly with public visitors.

Experience of developing outreach activities from scratch. Communicating important messages about climate change and the associated challenges to the public, and particularly to those still in education. To get a better idea of public levels of knowledge about the challenge of climate change. Develop activities to be usable in other contexts. To present my research challenges in a fun and accessible manner. (Academic staff)

I wanted to use it as an opportunity to gain experience at participating in an event explore possible ways of engaging people in what we do be creative. (Postgraduate student)

A number of participants highlighted how the skills and experience gained at the Festival were recognised as professional development, which can be added to CVs and the Imperial Plus[[3]](#footnote-3) scheme for recognising volunteering activities.

Collect points for ImperialPlus Contribute to college activities. Build and practice soft skills (communication, etc). (Undergraduate student)

I like outreach activities Communicating sciences is one of my passion it will be reflected on my CV. (Non-academic staff)

Participants were also motivated by their personal enjoyment of taking part in public engagement activities, and the Festival was deemed to be a high quality event in which they could participate.

To communicate my work and take part in one of the best outreach activities London has to offer! (Academic staff)

I love getting involved in outreach activities and I had heard great things about last year's festival. I hoped to get better at explaining scientific ideas to the general public (all ages) in an easily digestible way. (Postgraduate student)

Some participants recognised that taking part in the Festival allowed them to do something different from their everyday work. The Festival also enabled participants to bond and work differently with their team and make contacts and connections across Imperial.

So we thought that the festival would be a good idea and we thought it would be good, it would be a nice thing for the department to do. It’s good to bring people together and things like that as well.

To help out the team I've just started working with (my) department. I don't have much contact with other team members day-to-day so I thought I could meet people, and the Festival sounded fun. (Academic staff)

Public engagement

Engagement with public audiences was also a motivation for participants to become involved in Imperial Festival, with many participants stating that they wanted to communicate the excitement of science to the public.

I love the idea of explaining science to the public, teaching them the fun side of science in a way they can understand. This is why I took part in the festival 3 years in a row. (Postgraduate student)

I believe that science should be explained back to the public as outreach and public engagement events, so that people and especially children can learn something and get excited to explore the surrounding world. (Academic staff)

I thought that it would be a good opportunity to share with the public what my degree is about and get people excited about science in general. (Postgraduate student)

Engaging the next generation with science was reported to be a popular specific motivation for taking part.

I wanted to be involved so I can explain our research work to the public. I also wanted to motivate children into taking sciences. (Academic staff)

I like the idea of conveying our research to the general public. This way people can understand more of our contribution to the society. Also in this way we inspire more children on following a Science academic career. (Postgraduate student)

Enthusiastic to share some knowledge with the public, as well as see what peoples outlook to the scientific field was. Also hopefully inspire some future scientists. (Undergraduate student)

Some participants recognised the Festival provided opportunities to address wider or strategic public engagement objectives.

Our public engagement strategy is an important part of our overall research strategy. Imperial Festival is something we've been taking part in since 2012 and all the researchers who've volunteered for it each year have come away from it having enjoyed it and using the experience to help them plan their own engagement activities. (Hospital staff)

Follows along with Concordat agreement of openness in research which imperial college have signed up to. (Academic staff)

Project development and raising awareness of work

Some participants used the Festival to test out public engagement or research ideas and get feedback on specific projects, including sometimes collecting data that can be used to inform future research and projects. Others saw the Festival as an opportunity to raise awareness of their work among both public and academic audiences.

We wanted to get feedback on a game we created for children as part of our 3rd year group project. (Postgraduate student)

We were keen to gain insights of the publics views on feeling safe in hospital and what it means to be well or unwell as two of our current research themes. We also took the opportunity to gain public opinion on a future research directions. (Postgraduate student)

More specifically, we conducted a survey at the Festival this year which will help inform future projects we are working (…) - so it was a very useful experience as well as being enjoyable. (Academic staff)

To raise the profile of my institute with new Imperial people and externally, and to give our staff and students and event to get involved in together. (Non-academic staff)

## Participant involvement in Imperial Festival

Participants completing the survey were asked which aspect of Imperial Festival they were involved in and could choose more than one. 24% (33) of respondents had been located in the Superbug Zone, 19% (26) in the Research Zone, 18% (24) in the Health and Wellbeing Zone and 14% (19 in the Energy and Environment Zone. There were fewer than 10 respondents in each of the other categories. Descriptions of ‘other’ included the music and dance tents.

**Participants’ locations in Imperial Festival (n=135)**

## Opinions of Imperial Festival

128 participants rated their overall experience of Imperial Festival. Overall, the vast majority (90%, 115) of participants rated their experience positively, with 47% (60) selecting excellent and 43% (55) selecting good.

Participants’ rating of their Festival experiences (n=128)

The most common reasons given for positive ratings were the free food and drink for participants, interaction with the public and the general organisation of the event.

We were given free food and drinks. especially water which I thought it was very important since we were talking a lot. (Postgraduate student)

Varied activities, a lot of chances to interact and discuss with researchers, a lot of activities for kids, very positive involvement of the members of staff. Great opportunities to network. (Non-academic staff)

We had the opportunity to talk to plenty of people. The level of organisation was excellent and clear communication. In hindsight, an additional poster board would have been useful. The room was incredibly warm, so more water would have been good. The food was excellent. (Postgraduate student)

A never ending stream of interested and engaging experiences with the public - very enthusing ! I felt supported throughout by the organising team - water, food and their clear visability (if I needed help) enabled me to concentrate on just engaging with the public. (Academic staff)

Exhibitors were very well looked after by Imperial (water, catering etc). The festival was well organised. There was a very good public turnout, very well natured/enthusiastic etc. I was also impressed with the many post-docs and students who produced fantastic exhibits/activities. All-in-all a very fun event that I was proud to be a part of. (Academic staff)

Some participants made positive comparisons to previous years’ Imperial Festivals highlighting improvements in the organisation.

This year the festival was the most organised it's ever been. The volunteers were particularly good and a lot more visible. (External participant

I really think we're getting better and better at this. It was well organised this year, lots of room for feedback and good interaction between our stall organisers and the building organiser. (Academic staff)

26% (33) of all respondents were located in the Superbug Zone and although a majority had rated their overall experience as good or excellent, two participants rated their experience as poor. Comments from them and other participants in the Superbug Zone described some issues with layout and logistics of holding talks in the upstairs space. These were reported in survey responses and explored in more detail in post-Festival interviews.

The events and use of space in the Superbug zone was poorly planned and there was little assistance from Festival organizers. Integrating talks from academics that would draw a predominantly adult audience into a children's activity space was a complete mismatch. Academics and researchers who had taken time out of their schedule to get involved with the festival were rewarded with next to no technical support and a completely impractical setting … in which to deliver their talks. Even if the space had been in a more appropriate setting, there was only room for about 10 audience members to sit and listen. (Postgraduate student)

Few people came to hear my presentation due to the location. (Undergraduate student)

The space provided was a bit cramped for the amount of staff we had manning the stand, could have done with less staff or a different location. (Non-academic staff)

Participants in the Superbug Zone also indicated that there appeared to be some confusion about the mix of stalls and overall cohesiveness of this Zone.

This year the message has been totally diluted. Instead of focusing on bacteriology we have been mix with mosquitos, parasite, virus and fungi. We did not have a story. (Academic staff)

We were assigned to the superbug zone- we did not fit in with this zone. The superbug zone was clearly mostly about bacterial biology but the organisers had also picked up strays from the life sciences department without giving any real thought to what we actually do and the organisms we work with. (Academic staff)

The Superbug Zone was storyboarded which meant there was a certain route for visitors to go around the stands. This was so that visitors could build up a ‘story’ of what bacteria are, then where they live, whether they are good or bad for you etc. However, in practice this appeared not to happen, which was attributed to the inclusion of topics that were not part of the bacteria theme or there being insufficient guides or guidance for visitors about the route they should follow.

Successes

Participants were asked what was most successful about Imperial Festival 2016. Three themes emerged from their responses: engaging a varied age range of public audiences; number of visitors attracted; and the range of stands.

The opportunity to engage the public with research at Imperial was seen as a particular success of the Festival.

Inspired countless children, amazing displays of research as well as being really interactive and interesting. Many people were keen to discuss/debate many topics, which was fantastic to see. (Undergraduate student)

Showing the variety of research conducted here in the heart of London and discussing our research with the general public and receiving direct and honest feedback, absolutely fantastic! Personally, the feedback I received from one of the younger visitors saying :"I have learned so many things I didn't know in the past 5 minutes and I know a lot, this is brilliant!" (Academic staff)

The forum it provides to engage with members of the public of a diverse range of ages and backgrounds. (Non-academic staff)

Sheer diversity of activities and experiences for all ages! The feeling that the festival is getting bigger and more Ambitious every year . Though I hope it former outgrow the South Kensington campus because I feel that it is important that the public feel that science is open and accessible (they can enter and are welcome into the ivory tower !!) (Academic staff)

Participants also identified the size of the Festival as a success, mainly focussed on the large number of visitors it attracted.

Huge numbers of people came to our stand and interacted with us. We were very popular and visitors seemed to really enjoy their time at our stand. (Academic staff)

The amount of people we managed to attract. It gets bigger every year, and hopefully that trend continues. (Undergraduate student)

The large number of enthusiastic members of the public who came to the festival - it was a very sunny day and they chose to spend it with us. (Academic staff)

The scale! So many researchers showcasing their work, and so many visitors interested in the science. (Non-academic staff)

Participants also reported the range and variety of activities available to visitors as a specific success.

The breadth of the event was staggering! Had lots of fun in the superbug zone. Undergraduate student)

Range and scope of ideas and activities, and engaged and enthusiastic stallholders was very good. Good presence of volunteers able to help/advise with any issues. (Academic staff)

Lots of families came, children engaged in science. Seemed to be a larger variety of displays than previous years. (Postgraduate student)

Some participants commented on the successful layout of the different Zones and activities which they felt drew visitors into the campus or gave a sense of being busy but not overcrowded.

Improvements

Participants were asked what could be improved about Imperial Festival 2016. Five main themes emerged from their responses: planning and briefing before the Festival; onsite signage and communications; stand layout; access to food and drink; and audience diversity.

Participants identified some specific areas for improvement in terms of support in pre-Festival planning and briefing information. These comments mainly focussed on communications to stand holders about expected visitor numbers, other activities taking place at the Festival and logistics. It may be worth noting that pre-Festival communication happens at two levels: Festival organisers to activity organisers/leads and activity organisers/leads to their colleagues. However it appears that most of these suggestions refer to the first of these levels.

We were not prepared for the number of visitors and so did not have enough resources for the two days, as such we had to prepare more resources on the Saturday evening. (Academic staff)

It would be nice to have some formal knowledge about what other activities were taking place in the festival - a few days before it actually starts. So that I could be able to point out to the public other activities that were in the same theme as my own research interest / those the public expressed an interest in. (Academic staff)

Information gets a bit scarce during the last few days - particularly specifics on when/where to set up things often change and conflicting information gets given. (Postgraduate student)

The high-level organisation of the Festival. On more than one occasion I felt communication between zone leaders and stall organisers was unclear (regarding expectations, examples, logistical issues). (Academic staff)

The deadlines in the run-up could have been given earlier, including further clarity on what was required (e.g. word-limit on titles, descriptions). (Non-academic staff)

Some participants identified the onsite signage and communication with visitors as an area for improvement. In particular they emphasised the need for more specific information about Zone contents and concerns that a lack of signage and communication were thought to have resulted in overcrowding or shortage of visitors in some places in the Festival. Of particular note were perceived difficulties for visitors to find the Robot Zone and a lack of signs advertising talks and the Contemplation Zone.

More signposting to different areas, with greater specification as to what stands were in each section. (Undergraduate student)

More needs to be done to attract people to outlying zones. (Academic staff)

Better signs for navigation. Or if possible, an app with a map of the festival and schedules of all the events, so that people can plan their day. (Postgraduate student)

Signage and some control of numbers entering each of the designated areas in order to prevent overcrowding and allow everyone the opportunity to get close to exhibits and demonstrations etc. (External participant)

Although participants identified the range of stands as a success of the Festival, many described specific areas where stand layout could be improved. Some observed that the stands in certain Zones were too close together resulting in overcrowding. Others felt that some stands were difficult to find due to their location within their Zone. The Robot Zone was frequently mentioned as a Zone that experienced particular difficulties in terms of overcrowding. In contrast, the Research Zone was thought to have appeared empty or sparsely populated with stands only positioned at the edges of the marquee. Some participants were confused about the mix of stands and activities in some Zones and others suggested that there should be better coordination of stands to avoid duplication of topics and highlight connections between related topics. These layout issues were reflected in interviews which highlighted the need to consider how the different types of activities will work in practice when positioned next to each other.

Stalls were very cramped in some places, especially when there were big crowds. Disappointed that many research themes were not represented - would be good to see greater participation from researchers, especially as all those I spoke to said how much they enjoyed it! (Academic staff)

Our stall was tucked behind a pillar in a cramped location which made it difficult for people to find us. (External participant)

The great hall experienced quite a few choke points. … Some negative feedback was about chokepoints in the great hall and long queues building up around the stall. (Postgraduate student)

Also the Research Zone was strangely sparse - stalls shouldn't be pushed to the edges of the marquee like satellites. (Academic staff)

Although the free food and drink for participants was a common explanation for a positive rating of the Festival overall, it appeared that not all participants received sufficient water and some could not use their food and drink vouchers as the food outlets had closed by the time they finished their shifts. Reducing the queues for food was also identified as an area for improvement, as some participants felt they spent all their break time in queues.

More provisions for staff/researchers who have taken time off their weekend and presenting on the stands. I was in College from 10:30 setting up and spoke almost non-stop from 11am to 6pm, but only got one bottle of water for the entire day. (Academic staff)

More choices for food and maybe ask stall if they could not close straight away after the closing hours as some volunteers didn't get there in time to get there food (they were taking down the stall preparations). (Academic staff)

Very long queues for food and the bar. The bar needed more staff, they were very overworked and needed more people. (Postgraduate student)

Although many participants recognised the number of visitors as a success of the Festival, some expressed concern about a perceived lack of diversity and suggested that the Festival could make efforts to attract a wider audience in the future. Many participants recognised the audience as mainly those who are engaged with science or have some scientific knowledge. This was also reflected in the participants’ wider observations about Imperial Festival.

More diversity, it is still even after 5 years a very middle class, white affair. (External participant)

Most attendees seemed to have scientific or technical backgrounds, or be families of those with such backgrounds. If it were possible to bring in more people of other backgrounds, impact could be higher. Taking activities to schools/street festivals (without a specific science focus) around London or further afield could also help with this. (Academic staff)

Lots of alumni, lots of staff and their families who are knowledgeable about science - would be good to attract more people who are aren't so science-aware. (Postgraduate student)

Very very busy especially with children and families' rather educated. Socio-demographics should be improved, i.e. ethnicity (very white) and education (rather or highly educated). (Non-academic staff)

## Participant observations about Festival visitors

When asked for their observations on the audience attending the Festival, some participants thought it attracted a mixed crowd. However, a majority identified families as the main audience. Other main audience groups they identified were alumni or adults who have a connection with Imperial. Some participants commented that the audience was more varied on Saturday than Sunday, when it was felt there were fewer adults and teenagers.

Quite a mixed crowd as per last year but mainly consisting of families with young children, might just have been our stall though as that mainly attracted a young audience. (Postgraduate student)

A lot of kids (possibly 60% of the visitors which actually tried the demos). But also a lot of adults, which were trying the demos and staying around, asking questions about the research, etc. (Postgraduate student)

Visitors seemed to be mostly families, parents with children between the ages of 6-12. (Non-academic staff)

Many participants noted teenagers and younger adults by their absence at the Festival.

The demographic mostly involved children and their parents or grandparents. I didn't see many teenagers around. However everyone there was interested in what was going on and enjoyed the festival. (Postgraduate student)

There were all ages. The youngest person I talked to was about 4 or 5 and the oldest were retired. There were a lot of parents. I didn't see many people aged 16-25 though. (Postgraduate student)

Mostly young children (families) and alumni. More work is needed to draw in 16+ youths who would really enjoy the festival. Perhaps advertisements should be sent to schools. (Non-academic staff)

There was people from everywhere and the average age was either children or elder people, it was hard to find people from 20-30. (Non-academic staff)

Some participants expressed the view that many stands and activities were aimed at children and that adult visitors may not have been provided for sufficiently, or that there should be a clearer distinction between activities for adults and children.

Lots of alumni visited with their families. Think many of the festival stands were aimed at children - feel like more activities were needed for non-science adults. As many of the stands only had children activities and then discussion for adults on the science. (Postgraduate student)

There were all sorts of people - in general people were only attracted to the most interactive types of stands. Some of the stands were nice but too oriented to children. Imperial should have a great impact on adults as well, so some of the stands should offer more adult interaction (which I guess they would like and attract more people). (Postgraduate student)

Possibly organise activities more clearly into those aimed at adults and those at various aged children. I appreciate the adults can always ask questions at any stand, but a dedicated zone with demos aimed at adults would attract a wider range of people. If I wasn't volunteering I wouldn't come as it feels almost entirely family themed - some more complicated demos and less colouring etc in a separate area would give a more grown up feel (like museum lates). (External participant)

## Impacts of Imperial Festival on participants

Participants were asked what impact the 2016 Festival, and previous years’ Festivals have had or are likely to have on them, their research, their colleagues and their opinions or views about Imperial.

Personal impacts

The most-commonly reported personal impacts for all categories of participants were increased confidence, renewed motivation and enthusiasm for their own research, and enhanced communication skills.

It certainly has helped my ability to organise events and to communicate my research at a level appropriate for a very diverse audience. (Academic staff)

It has inspired me to share more about my research with the public. (Postgraduate student)

Boosted confidence and energy about my research area. (Academic staff)

I was surprised how interested the public and alumni was in the research. I suppose this served as encouragement. (Postgraduate student)

Research impacts

Imperial academic staff and postgraduate students were asked to describe any impacts that Imperial Festivals have had on research. Although the most common response was none or nothing, a number of respondents described how the 2016 and previous Festivals have widened the impact of their work on public audiences, enabled them to improve how they communicate their research to non-specialists or introduced them to contacts for potential partnership opportunities. In a few cases there were also impacts on specific projects in such as data collected at a Festival, visitor input refining research plans or their involvement leading to new project outputs.

Ensured that we are doing the correct research and asking the right questions. (Academic staff)

There were a few researchers from other departments around the College who expressed an interest in establishing collaborations as a result of finding out more about what we are working on. (Academic staff)

A couple of collaborations with new industrial contacts. (Academic staff)

Promotion of my network, project of realising an informative video and paper to be used in outreach activity. (Academic staff)

The feedback and recorded data we've got is invaluable and wouldn't have been possible anywhere else. We've even got some leads for the project to be developed and/or funded in the future which could become something really important.

Impacts on colleagues

Participants reported impacts on their colleagues which mainly focussed on team building and developing relationships with other research groups or other departments in Imperial.

Better visibility for the Centre and Department in which it is based; more cohesion with colleagues. (Non-academic staff)

Collaborating to design stalls has allowed myself and others to interact with colleagues I hadn't worked with before. (Academic staff)

Great opportunity to get to know other researchers in the building/college. Better working relationships afterwards - more collaborations in work too. (Academic staff)

It was a great way to promote my group to the public and other research groups (Postgraduate student)

Impacts on attitudes towards Imperial

Most participants felt their involvement in Imperial Festivals has a positive impact on their opinions about Imperial. They described how the Festival made them reflect on the work Imperial does in both research and public engagement, and that they felt proud to be part of a successful event.

I feel less isolated and more a part of the Imperial scientific community. (Academic staff)

My opinions of Imperial have changed and the festival demonstrated a fantastic way Imperial are attempting to encage with the public about ongoing research and opportunities. (Postgraduate student)

Understand how important the college deems outreach and it's public image. That they are doing so much more then I realise. (Postgraduate student)

Makes me proud to work at Imperial - reminds me that there is a lot of fantastic research carried out here. Proud that the college wants to engage with the public and promote science - don't know any other uni that is so enthusiastic. (Academic staff)

Impacts on future intentions

The positive impacts described above were reflected in the numbers of participants who reported that they would take part in Imperial Festival again and who would recommend participation to someone else.

When asked if they would take part in a future Festival, 97% (105) selected yes or maybe. When asked if they would recommend taking part, the equivalent figure was 96% (104).

Participants’ future intentions about Imperial Festival (n=108)

A few respondents said they would not recommend or take part again in Imperial Festival. One was leaving Imperial, one was disappointed that their invited speaker was not part of the main talks programme and one was unhappy with the organisation and support for the Superbug Zone.

# Volunteer feedback about Imperial Festival 2016

This section documents the findings from the survey that was taken by 126 respondents who volunteered at Imperial Festival 2016.

## Volunteer backgrounds and motivations

Respondents were asked to select a category that best described them from a list of five options. Over half (52%, 65) were non-academic staff members at Imperial. Those who selected ‘none of the above’ (23%, 29) were asked to describe themselves. Half were sixth-form students on the Imperial STEM potential programme[[4]](#footnote-4), with most of the remainder being public volunteers or members of Friends of Imperial.

Volunteer categories (n=126)

Reasons for volunteering were varied. For Imperial staff, they included being expected to participate as part of a job, wanting to support the Festival or colleagues and for enjoyment. Some new staff mentioned that it was a way of getting to know their new employer.

I enjoy volunteering at events and have done so quite a lot. It helps to maintain links with SK campus (as I'm not based there normally). (Imperial staff)

Assisting at the Alumni Weekend as I'm from the Alumni team (Imperial staff)

I wanted to support Imperial College in their quest for making Science, Technology and Medicine more understanding to the public. (Imperial staff)

As a new member of staff, this was a great opportunity to get to know the College, new colleagues, and students. I also wanted to contribute to the smooth running of the event, and support my team, all of whom also volunteered. (Imperial staff)

For students, the most common reasons for volunteering were an interest in public engagement and wanting to help present a positive image of Imperial.

I volunteered for the Outreach department because I think that the work they do is absolutely vital to attaining equality in science. (Imperial student)

I wanted to make sure that Imperial Festival goes by smoothly and has a good name with everyone visiting. I also wanted to experience behind-the-scenes activities that go on organizing such a massive and well-managed event. (Imperial student)

I wanted to help give the best representation of Imperial and science to the rest of the people. And it's also an enriching and rare experience. (Imperial student)

For public volunteers, the Festival provided another volunteering opportunity, a chance to learn about Imperial and for sixth-form students, an opportunity to promote science or gain experience for their CVs or university applications.

I am a Team London Ambassador and I start my Ambassadoring the end of July and this festival was my opportunity to start volunteering early. (Public volunteer)

I chose to volunteer because I wanted to help offer the public a wider experience of science. As some members of the public may not fully be aware of science, I believe it is important educate and inform them about it. Also I wanted to give something back to Imperial as I am part of the STEM Potential Programme. (Public volunteer)

I wanted to get involved with the Imperial College in order to make me more aware about what is going on and to help me with my UCAS application when I apply to Imperial College. (Public volunteer)

## Volunteer involvement in Imperial Festival

Most volunteers reported that their participation in Imperial Festival covered more than one Zone or activity. The most common response was Alumni Zone (19%, 24), followed by Festival Entrances (18%, 23), descriptions of ‘other’ were covering the entire Festival and balloons.

Volunteer locations in Imperial Festival (n=126)

## Volunteer opinions of Imperial Festival

119 respondents rated their overall experience as a volunteer at Imperial Festival 2016. A majority (85%, 101) rated it above average, with 43% (51) selecting the highest rating.

Rating of the volunteer experience (n=119)

Most volunteers who rated their experience as excellent or good explained that they felt supported during the Festival, their roles were clearly defined and they enjoyed their interaction with visitors and other volunteers.

Other members of Imperial staff were friendly and made sure that we were alright throughout the day. It was fun talking to members of the public and telling them about Imperial/the festival. (Public volunteer)

There was clear communication about what our responsibilities were and I didn't have to do anything too stressful or demanding. Well organised. (Imperial staff)

Support from supervisors was great; facilities for volunteers were also great (Green Room, snacks) as well as the t-shirts. (Imperial student)

Around half of volunteers who rated their experience as good felt that some aspects of volunteer briefing and on-the-day supervision and organisation could have been better.

Everyone is very friendly, branding (green tee-shirts) is visible, pretty comprehensive information pack. Would've benefited from better understanding of the whole event organisation - what is where, what will be the most popular exhibits and events, to better guide people. Make sure there are maps on every contact point. (Public volunteer)

Overall, I really enjoyed both days and thought we were treated really well as volunteers - the green room is always appreciated. The reason why I didn't give an excellent score was because I felt my experience would have been better had we been given more information about our roles. ….it didn't undermine my overall enjoyment, it would have just been helpful to have more information. (Imperial staff)

I felt that the volunteer process was very well run. However, I did feel a little under-utilized at times. There were a few instances where I stood around for over an hour without very much to do besides being a visible presence for visitors. Of course that is an important function, but it would have been good to have some kind of jobs list specific to my area, if possible. (Imperial staff)

The most common explanations from volunteers who rated their experience as average were roles or responsibilities being poorly defined and there being too many volunteers in some areas or Zones, meaning they felt underused.

Way too many volunteers were involved and so no jobs needed to be done. (Public volunteer)

When I arrived I found it difficult to find my zone and didn't know what my duties were, as I hadn't had a briefing and was unable to find anyone who could direct me towards where I could be briefed. I didn't know my way around the site, but as I was wearing my volunteer t-shirt people kept coming up to me and asking questions which i didn't know the answer to. Eventually found someone to show me round. (Public volunteer)

There was very little I could do as my role was not well defined and I did not have access to my zone supervisor initially. (Imperial student)

Volunteering activities are not well organised, too many volunteers has been recruited for some area without a specific lists of tasks. (Imperial student)

The two volunteers who rated their experience as poor were a sixth form student who worked on the Entrances and Superbug Zone and felt they did not gain anything from the experience. The other was a member of non-academic staff who felt poorly briefed and supported in the Workshop Zone, which they felt limited their ability to engage with and support visitors.

Successes

When asked about what was most successful about their experience as a volunteer, respondents most-commonly highlighted visitors’ reactions to the Festival or aspects of their engagement with visitors.

I enjoyed the positive feedback from Festival goers and Alumni when they had completed their tours. (Imperial staff)

Seeing the smiles on the faces of the people as they left and hearing how much they enjoyed the event, as we encouraged them to give their feedback online. (Imperial staff)

The number of kids saying they want to be scientists when they grow up. (Imperial student)

The most pleasing was the chance to talk and inspire smaller kids and see them get involved in the sciences and learning new things all around me. (Public volunteer)

Imperial staff also highlighted how their involvement increased feelings of being part of a community.

The feeling of being involved in something exciting and being part of a great institution. (Imperial staff)

Coming together as a community to put on a great demonstration for friends and the public. (Imperial staff)

Other reported successes were having time to see the Festival and being able to volunteer for specific shifts or Zones.

Suggested improvements

A majority of volunteers suggested two main categories of improvements to enhance the volunteer experience:

* Distribution of volunteers, encompassing making sure areas or roles are not overstaffed and the all volunteers have a clear role; that roles and shift times match; and ensuring public volunteers are not assigned roles or areas where they need detailed knowledge of Imperial, the campus and/or the Festival.
* More detailed briefing of volunteers, including at a general level imparting information about the contents of all Zones and where amenities and popular activities are located and at the level of specific Zones or areas, ensuring volunteers are fully briefed about what is happening within those Zones and are provided with information that they can impart to visitors.

Volunteers who rated their experience above average as well as those who rated it average or less suggested improvements to the allocation or distribution of volunteers so that all volunteers felt usefully deployed and fully occupied. There were specific references to overstaffing in the Info Tent and to volunteers who had nothing to do at certain times.

Having more efficient timetabling - we didn't do anything for the 1st 3 hours of music tent. (Imperial staff)

I thought we may have been too many at the info tent. I think at max. three people dealing with merchandise and questions should be in the info tent. Volunteers otherwise find themselves waiting around. (Imperial student)

I was left with 3 hours with nothing to do, I did like the fact I had time to go around the stands but it was too excessive. (Public volunteer)

The allocation of activities for volunteers did not always seem to be in the place of greatest demand - so three volunteers for my area (Superbugs) from 10.30 - when the area did not open until 12.00 could have utilised more effectively elsewhere. The researchers did not require our help setting up. (Imperial staff)

Imperial staff volunteers also suggested that roles where a knowledge of the campus was essential, such as the Info Tent and Tour registration or guiding, should only be allocated to those who have a detailed knowledge of Imperial and can answer visitors’ questions about the campus and institution. It was felt that public volunteers were least likely to have this knowledge. Some public volunteers and Imperial staff based at other campuses also acknowledged that they needed more information about the campus layout.

This year we had non-staff/student volunteers for the first time. I think that in the future these volunteers ought to be more restricted in the roles that they can take on OR they need to be better trained. I worked on tour sign-up with someone who had never been to Imperial, so she couldn't offer any insight into what tours involved - this created a bad impression for visitors. (Imperial staff)

I also didn't realise how many volunteers from outside Imperial would be working (which was fantastic …). Some of these volunteers were made supervisers of their area which seemed a little odd as they didn't know the campus at all. It may be helpful next year to provide these outside volunteers with some more general info about Imperial's South Ken Campus e.g. the history of the Queen's Tower (which I was asked at least three times). (Imperial staff)

Volunteers in all categories, including Imperial staff and students, suggested that the general and Zone-specific briefings of volunteers need to be much more detailed. They recommended that the volunteer briefing should cover visitors’ most frequently asked questions and more information about the contents of each Zone, including a tour for those in key roles, so that they can respond to requests about the location of particular exhibits or stands. Volunteers also said they would have appreciated having more than one general briefing session to give them options if they were unavailable at the scheduled time.

At volunteer briefing session: include info on where the headline/heavily advertised attractions are. i.e. "Where are the drones?", "Where's the house of the future?" etc (Imperial staff)

I would have benefited from a quick "festival tour" before starting my turn. I was asked many questions about events that I knew nothing about and, even though I had the map and the information, I was not able to answer them as well as I would have liked. I then went on to see some of this events and realised that a quick look around would have helped enormously. (Imperial staff)

Better briefing for volunteers. I was asked a lot of questions like where is drones/which zone has physics or chemistry related things. I didn't have a chance to look around beforehand, and I couldn't answer a lot of questions like these. (Imperial student)

Volunteers recommended that briefings for specific Zones should be more detailed to enable them to help or advise visitors. Particular note was made of the need to have proactive supervisors in each Zone who are fully briefed and in turn brief volunteers effectively.

I think to support the volunteers, who may not know the building, are experiencing volunteering for the first time, a time should be set aside to meet the supervisor, therefore the supervisors arriving a bit earlier than the volunteers and having a briefing about the shift and showing us where certain areas are. (Imperial staff)

Only appoint well trained and appropriate people to be supervisors, and think carefully about what staffing levels are really required. (Imperial staff)

Better defined roles and briefing at the start of the shift. (Imperial student)

My zone supervisor on the second day was not really on top of things, she didn't really know the locations or the schedule. (Imperial student)

Miscellaneous suggestions to improve the volunteer experience focused on having clearer information for volunteers (and visitors) about Tours; improving signs with an emphasis on functionality over style; and having more flexibility over access to food and drink, which included greater variety in the offering; food and drink being available after formal closing time; reducing the need for volunteers to queue for food; and for supervisors not to have to make repeated requests for food and drink vouchers.

Volunteers also made particular suggestions to improve the Festival experience for visitors:

* Scheduling activities in the Dance and Music tents so that they do not overlap and sound contamination is minimised
* Having clear signs for Tour leaders
* Having a bigger tent for workshops

Comparison with previous Imperial Festivals

Around one-third of respondents had volunteered at Imperial Festivals in previous years. They were asked how their experiences in 2016 compared to earlier Festivals. Most comments came from Imperial staff and were positive. They highlighted the dedicated Volunteer Zone and volunteer check-in along with being able to choose shifts as improvements. Some Alumni Weekend volunteers appreciated feeling more connected to the Festival volunteer team this year. As mentioned above, some volunteers were concerned about the allocation of external volunteers to key roles which they felt had not happened in previous years.

## Volunteers’ observations and interactions with visitors

Volunteers were asked to report their observations of visitor types and visitors’ movement around the Festival. Their observations confirmed the evaluators’ own observations and visitors’ reported experiences, i.e.:

* Visitors enjoyed themselves
* Most visitors were families with young children
* Visitors who had done prior research about the Festival or had heard about a particular activity were looking for specific stands or exhibits, rather than Zones
* Particular visitor groups such as teenagers or alumni were looking for specific types of information (about university study or science subjects for the former and about which other alumni were attending or particular departments for the latter)
* Some Zones and stands became overcrowded, which reduced visitor enjoyment and engagement
* There were long queues at many food outlets, including for people who only wanted to buy drinks
* The vintage cars on Exhibition Road attracted visitors, but relatively few of these found their way to the rest of the Festival
* Certain names, e.g. Robots and Superbug, are more appealing to family groups than names like Research Zone, which need more explanation
* Most visitors remained in the central area around the Research Zone unless they were specifically looking for an event or the Robot or Superbug Zones

Volunteers were also invited to report which questions they were most frequently asked by visitors. The answers could form the basis of a visit FAQ briefing for volunteers in future years. The top 10 questions asked by visitors to Imperial Festival 2016 were:

1. Where are the toilets? This includes are they accessible, is there baby changing, can I get in with a pram or buggy?
2. Where can I find a specific stand or exhibit? This includes exhibits or stands that featured in Festival publicity?
3. Tell me about tours, how/where do I join them, how long do they last, are they accessible to buggies/pram, wheelchairs?
4. What is the best thing to see / what do you recommend for us or age group \_\_?
5. Where is \_\_ Zone and what is in it? Includes where is \_\_ Zone on the map?
6. Where is the Robot Zone?
7. What is this Festival about?
8. Where can I get water/tea/coffee/ice cream and sit down to eat?
9. Tell me about talks, where are they, how long are they, how long before the start do I need to get there?
10. How long is the queue for \_\_?

In addition, Alumni weekend volunteers were asked if alumni could visit their old departments, where could they meet particular individuals, where was Alumni Weekend registration and what alumni services were available?

Almost all volunteers also reported positive feedback from visitors who were happy and complimentary about the Festival. A few mentioned criticisms of the tour booking system or visitors who were disappointed that they could not get a place on a tour.

## Impacts of Imperial Festival on volunteers

Personal impacts on volunteers

A majority of volunteers reported that Imperial Festival had positive personal impacts for them. Most-commonly, volunteers described how it increased their awareness of the range of research and other activities undertaken at Imperial.

A better understanding of the research going on at the College, as well as what the College offers in terms of arts and music. (Imperial staff)

It was a great experience and it has given me an insight into the research that we do, and the variety of things that are going on in the college. In an admin role you don't necessarily get to see much of this and it definitely gave me part of the bigger picture. I was surprised at how many of my colleagues don't know anything about the festival and I've told them they all need to go next year! (Imperial staff)

Broad range of research, starting from classical science to advanced technological research was the best part. (Imperial student)

Volunteers in all categories also reported that they want to do more volunteering or public engagement or become involved in events organisation as a result of their experiences.

I definitely still want to volunteer next year! I am a Management Trainee on the Management Training Graduate Scheme and I would now be quite interested in seeing if I can do a future placement which relates to the Festival, either in the planning, marketing, outreach or evaluation. (Imperial staff)

It has made me want to continue my work with Imperial Outreach even when I have started work at {name of organisation] in September. (Imperial student)

Makes me want to volunteer again for 2017 and maybe choose another theme to volunteer for. (Public volunteer)

Other personal impacts were volunteers making new contacts, enjoying their interaction with visitors and feeling proud to be part of a successful event.

Impacts on volunteers’ attitudes towards Imperial

A majority of volunteers reported that the Festival had positive impacts on their views or opinions about Imperial College London, with others reporting no impact of this type. One negative impact was reported – a public volunteer who said takes volunteers for granted. Imperial staff and students most commonly explained that the Festival either reinforced their positive views or deepened them, particularly around feelings of being part of a community or wanting to engage with outside audiences.

I have always known that I have worked for a good establishment and being a volunteer just allowed me to see how others feel as well and the togetherness, where all the different departments came together to work as one to make the event successful, and as we wore the green tshirts we became 'ambassadors' for the college. (Imperial staff)

It makes me realise how much work is happening behind close doors at the College and that our scientists are actually great ambassadors and can reach out to all ages to explain very complex work and theories. The Festival makes Imperial appear open to everyone and accessible. (Imperial staff)

The festival was the first time since I started my PG course that I felt proud to be a part of ICL. It has left me feeling more like Imperial is a warm and exciting place to be. (Imperial student)

I already had Imperial for a great university before I came. Now, as a current undergraduate, it makes me very proud to see that the university really does its best to keep on being a world-leading research university. (Imperial student)

Public volunteers also described positive impacts on their feelings towards Imperial. For some sixth form-students the Festival has inspired them to want to study at Imperial.

I believe the festival and being able to see the facilities and resources Imperial has to offer has made me more open to applying there for a university option. (Public volunteer)

I have realised how important a research intensive university is when looking at STEM subjects. Seeing the type of research going on in the university it has definitely encouraged me to apply to Imperial for university. (Public volunteer)

It doesn't only seem like that 'elite' only genius' go there kind of university anymore as it opened its doors to anyone of any age and any intellectual ability to come and look at something they were interested in. (Public volunteer)

Never been to Imperial College before but now I know it is not as stuffy and stuck up as I thought. (Public volunteer)

Comments from Imperial staff and student volunteers also indicated how the Festival increased or reinforced feelings of pride in being part of Imperial.

Impacts on volunteers’ future intentions

96% (109) of volunteers selected yes or maybe when asked if they would volunteer at a Future Imperial Festival, suggesting that they would volunteer in future years. Using the same criteria, 96% (109) also indicated they would recommend being a volunteer at Imperial Festival. These responses are further indicators of the Festival’s positive impacts on a majority of volunteers.

Volunteer future intentions about Imperial Festival (n=113)

Reasons for answering no were a poor experience in specific areas of the Festival.

# Support staff feedback about Imperial Festival 2016

This section documents the findings from the survey that was taken by 13 members of support staff, such as technical, catering and security staff who worked during Imperial Festival 2016.

Support staff were asked to rate Imperial Festival. Their views were positive with 7 rating it excellent and 6 rating it good. Explanations for these ratings highlighted the accessibility of the Festival and visitors’ enjoyment.

I think it's a great free event available to all. (Support staff)

The Festival met it's usual high standards from the public's point of view. Everyone had a good time and the event fulfilled it's brief. The organisation behind the scenes felt more strained than previous years hence the good rather than excellent rating but this did not affect the outcome from the visitor's perspective. (Support staff)

When asked what they thought was particularly successful about the Festival, most support staff mentioned particular Zones or exhibits. All had received positive feedback from visitors apart from a few mentions of overcrowding.

Support staff suggestions to improve the Festival focused on having earlier and clearer communications and schedules about support requirements; enforcing deadlines for ordering equipment; and having more catering staff to reduce queues for refreshments so that staff are not kept away from their duties for too long.

Half of the respondents had worked at Imperial Festival before 2016. They said it was bigger and better for visitors than in previous years but highlighted that this growth increased the need for earlier planning deadlines and more detailed specification of requirements.

It was bigger and more interactive in terms of exhibitors. It did all come together a little late from an AV point of view and the exhibitor requirements were a little confused. (Support staff)

Bigger and better which also equals harder work which is why we need clearer deadlines for equipment and floor plans for next year. (Support staff)

Only a few support staff answered when asked about the Festival’s impacts on their views about Imperial College London. Those who did respond expressed positive views.

It shows that we can all come together and put on a great show even through adversity. (Support staff)

Made me realise what a diverse and innovative place Imperial College is. (Support staff)

# Conclusions

This section reviews the impacts of Imperial Festival, Schools Day and Alumni Weekend against their intended outcomes. It then identifies some learning points for future consideration and provides a general concluding statement.

## Imperial Festival impacts

***Imperial Festival Intended Outcomes***

**Outcome 1. The Festival is well attended and highly rated by visitors and delivery staff:** This outcome was achieved. More than 15,000 visitors attended over the two days. 89% of visitors age 12 or over rated Imperial Festival above average as excellent (51%) or good (38%), the equivalent figure for participants and volunteers were 90% (47% and 43%) and 85% (43% and 42%).

**Outcome 2. 50% of external visitors have no specific connection to Imperial.**

This outcome was achieved. 55% of public visitors reported that they had not visited Imperial College London prior to the Festival, including those who are friends or family of current or former staff and students. 52% of visitors came from outside London, which is 12% greater than 2015 and suggest the Festival is extending its geographic reach.

**Outcome 3. We have a clear idea of the contribution of advertising, editorial in external media outlets, and College social media contribute to people’s attendance at the Festival.**

This outcome was achieved. The evaluation findings suggest that proactive, targeted direct contact through email and social media or word of mouth referrals are the most important promotional channels for Imperial Festival, with advertising being less significant. 40% of visitors heard about Imperial Festival through an email from Imperial, 33% heard via social media (20% greater than 2015) and a total of 28% via flyers, posters, screens or news or magazine articles. 29% heard via word of mouth, indicating the relative importance of informal referrals in the promotion of Imperial Festival.

**Outcome 4. Visitors experience increased learning outcomes**.

Positive outcomes were identified for four of the five Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs), which were developed as a tool for museums, libraries and archives to demonstrate a wide spectrum of outcomes and impacts for visitors and users. [[5]](#footnote-5):

*Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity:* 89% of visitors rated Imperial Festival above average, indicating that they enjoyed it. A majority of visitors of secondary school age were inspired by their experiences to want to study at Imperial.

*Knowledge & Understanding:* 92% of visitors learned something new at Imperial Festival, 90% increased their understanding of work/research carried out at Imperial and 69% increased their understanding of Imperial activities that are available to the public.

*Attitudes & Values:* 78% of visitors further developed their interest in science suggesting that they were more positive about science. A majority of visitors described positive impacts on their feelings about Imperial College London as described in Outcome 5.

*Activity, Behaviour & Progression:* 98% of visitors intend to come to another Imperial Festival. 99% would recommend Imperial Festival and 98% intend to come to another Imperial public event. 63% want to find out more about Imperial.

These findings suggest that there is scope to increase Imperial Festival’s provision around giving visitors information about other Imperial public events and activities

**Outcome 5. Visitors and staff/ students think favourably about the College as a result of attending / working at the Festival.**

This outcome was achieved in that positive experiences were reported by all groups. As described above, Public and staff/student visitors rated and described their experiences of Imperial Festival and views about Imperial College London in positive terms. Nearly all visitors with a connection to Imperial, such as current staff or students, former staff and alumni described positive feelings. Most commonly they reported feelings of pride engendered by the Festival. They also described how they learned more about the breadth and applied nature of Imperial’s current research. Many visitors of secondary school age indicated that the Festival had inspired them to want to study at Imperial.

91% of participants involved in the delivery of Festival activities were Imperial staff or students. 90% rated their overall experiences above average. Most participants described that taking part had a positive impact on their opinions of Imperial. Evaluation questions that explore participant impacts could be made quantitative in future to simplify analysis and allow these impacts to be expressed as a % (as in Outcome 4 for visitors above).

Most participants felt the Festival has a positive impact on their opinions about Imperial. They described how the Festival made them reflect on the work Imperial does in both research and public engagement, and that they felt proud to be part of the event. There were some examples of the Festival having contributed directly to the wider impact of research work on public audiences and creating partnership opportunities through networking at the event. In a few cases there were also impacts on specific research projects and research plans.

**Outcome 6. Volunteers have a positive experience with learning outcomes.**

This outcome was achieved. 85% of Volunteers and all support staff rated their overall experience of Imperial Festival above average and attributed this to their enjoyment and satisfaction at taking part. Volunteers reported feeling proud or motivated by their involvement and the vast majority indicated that the Festival has had positive impacts on their opinion of Imperial. Volunteers emphasised the need for detailed briefings, better allocation of volunteers and more clearly defined roles in some areas to optimise the volunteer experience and indirectly improve the experience for visitors. The desiccated Volunteer Zone and volunteer check-in were welcomed and highly regarded by all volunteers.

A majority of volunteers enjoyed the experience, developed a greater understanding of Imperial College and enhanced their skills and knowledge around event organisation. Many were inspired to do more volunteering or become involved in event organisation. Volunteers made new contacts and enjoyed their interaction with visitors and felt proud to be part of a successful event.

Imperial Festival reinforced or deepened staff and student volunteers’ positive views about Imperial College London particularly around feeling proud, being a community or an institution that wants to engage with outside audiences. Public volunteers also described positive impacts on their feelings towards Imperial. For some sixth form-student volunteers the Festival has inspired them to want to study at Imperial.

**Outcome 7. The benefits of including public engagement as an integral part of research are appreciated and understood by the Imperial community, especially academics and senior management.**

The outcome was achieved for staff and students who participated in Imperial Festival 2016. Senior Managers need to be interviewed or surveyed separately in future to obtain their views. Public engagement was one of the main reasons that staff and students participated in the Festival, with examples of it being aligned to public engagement strategies. They also described engagement with the public as one of the main successes and indicated that the Festival encouraged them to reflect on public engagement at an institutional level and within their own work. There is a suggestion that academic staff are beginning to appreciate other impacts that a public engagement can have on research with some examples reported where data were collected from Festival visitors and visitors’ opinions were informing research questions and plans.

**Outcome 8. Staff and students commit to contributing their time, creativity and ideas to future Imperial Festivals, Fringes and other public engagement events, and would recommend the experience to others.**

This outcome was achieved. 91% of participants and 77% of volunteers were Imperial staff and students. 97% of participants and 96% of volunteers would take part in a future Imperial Festival with 96% and 96% respectively reporting that they would recommend taking part. This outcome is a further indicator of the Festival’s positive impacts on those involved in its delivery.

Imperial Festival Strategic Objectives

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imperial Festival Strategic Objective | Impact Summary |
| 1. To celebrate the work and the community of Imperial College London | This impact was achieved as Imperial Festival was enjoyed by all categories of visitors and participants. |
| 2. To make a positive contribution to Festival visitor’s learning outcomes (knowledge & understanding, skills, attitudes & values, enjoyment/ inspiration/ creativity, activity behaviour and progression) | As evidenced in outcome 4 this impact was achieved. |
| 3. To generate a positive impression of the College amongst Festival visitors, staff working at the Festival, and staff / students visiting the Festival | As evidenced in outcome 5 this impact was achieved. |
| 4. To increase the impact of Imperial research | This is a longer term impact. At a general level, Imperial Festival is contributing towards the achievement of this impact by featuring research topics in the Festival Programming and by providing researchers with an opportunity to undertake public engagement with a large audience. |
| 5. To influence the path of research carried out at Imperial | This impact can only be evaluated in the long term. There are some examples of direct impacts on research in terms of informing research questions and introducing potential research partners and collaborators which can be tracked in the future. |

We are writing a separate paper that will document suggested projects and individuals that the Festival organisers can track to assess Objectives 4 and 5 over the longer-term.

## Schools Day impacts

***Schools Day Intended Outcomes***

**Outcome 1: For children to return with their parents/families to the Festival on Saturday or Sunday**.

From the evaluation findings it is not possible to determine if this outcome was achieved. However most children who came to Schools Day (88%) indicated that they would visit Imperial again after schools Day.

**Outcome 2: For children to be inspired about science/technology/engineering/medicine and want to know more.**

This outcome was achieved. 83% of children indicated that were more interested in science after Schools Day and all described positive feelings about what they had seen and done. Teachers reported that Schools Day had inspired or enthused their pupils about science and university in general.

All but one of the teachers (13 of 14) rated Schools Day as above average and all rated the format above average. Some suggested that the format could be altered to allow pupils to spend longer on some of the most scientific activities, although all rated the format above average. Others teachers recommended that some presenters would benefit from training in engaging this particular age group.

**Outcome 3. For children to remember something they learnt on School’s day.**

This outcome was achieved. 94% of children reported that they learnt something and a majority described what they had learned, with their most common answers being facts about parts of the human body, including hearing, bone density and the heart.

**Outcome 4. For children to enjoy themselves.**

This outcome was achieved. 99% of children indicated that they enjoyed visiting Imperial. The most commonly described feeling about Schools Day was ‘Happy’, followed by ‘Interested’ and ‘Excited’.

**Outcome 5. For teachers to be more likely to use/encourage/develop practical science for their students**.

This outcome was achieved as most (10 of 14) teachers reported that Schools Day could potentially impact on their own teaching practice and described how they intend to use some of the Festival experiments in their own lessons, or just generally include more experiments in their classrooms or after school clubs.

**Outcome 6. For teachers to have a better understanding of what research happens at Imperial College.**

This outcome was partly achieved and was reported by 3 teachers. For it to be fully achieved, it requires Schools Day activities to be more explicitly linked to research at Imperial.

**Outcome 7. For schools not already engaged with the College to become more so.**

This outcome was partly achieved. Most of the teachers (10 of 14) had not previously visited Imperial College and none had been to Imperial Festival before. 3 teachers reported that they know more about Imperial’s outreach work as a result of Schools Day.

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| --- | --- |
| Schools Day Strategic Objective | Impact Summary |
| 1. To strengthen relationships between Imperial and primary schools | This impact was achieved in that primary school pupils and teachers enjoyed and benefited from their experiences at Schools Day and most intend to visit Imperial in the future. |
| 2. To improve the Festival’s engagement with young students and their parents and families; | Improved engagement with young students was achieved by Schools Day. However this evaluation has not examined if Schools Day has engaged their parents and families. |
| 3. To align public programming between the College’s Outreach and Public Engagement groups; | This impact was achieved in the sense that Schools Day incorporated elements of programming from both groups. These elements appear to have been complementary. |
| 4. In the longer term, to integrate the Festival Schools Day with other Outreach projects – for example, Imperial students on the Pimlico connection invite their class of students to attend the Festival Schools Day. | This impact can only be assessed at future Imperial Festivals. |

## Alumni Weekend impacts

There are a number of Alumni Weekend intended outcomes that can only be assessed using Imperial’s own monitoring data and information. They are:

**Outcome 1: For the number of Alumni Weekend attendees to increase each year**

**Outcome 2: Increase number of 2016 graduates attending Alumni Weekend**

**Outcome 3: Increase number of Milestone Reunions each year**

**Outcome 8: To gather up-to-date data from alumni using Contact Update Forms**

**Outcome 10: Support Advancement Fundraisers to develop relationships and Regular Giving donations**

The focus for this evaluation was Imperial Festival, however the evaluation findings have enabled us to draw some conclusions about progress against all other Alumni Weekend intended outcomes.

The evaluation findings suggest that Imperial Festival and Alumni weekend are not necessarily seen as separate events by alumni, with a majority (89%) attending both. Therefore it is difficult to say how much the Festival contributes to Alumni Weekend outcomes. A majority of alumni either think the two events should be held at the same time (80%) or don’t mind if they are held together or separately (17%).

**Outcome 4: Raise awareness of and increase interaction within the alumni community.** The third most popular reason for attending Alumni Weekend was *to catch up with former classmates and other alumni,* suggesting that they use the event to connect with other alumni. 64% of alumni strongly agreed or agreed that the event *enables me to interact and connect with other alumni.* There is scope for Alumni Weekend to increase its impact in this area.

**Outcome 5: Learn about the achievements for Imperial alumni and share experiences.** This outcome was achieved for most alumni. 78% strongly agreed or agreed that Alumni Weekend *raises my awareness of the achievements of Imperial alumni.* Most alumni who visited the Alumni Showcase rated it positively with some evidence that the Showcase could be given a higher profile at Alumni Weekend.

**Outcome 6:** **Help alumni develop their Imperial network, increasing social interactions and professional contacts.** This outcome was partly achieved and as mentioned in outcome 4 in this section, there is scope for Alumni Weekend to provide more support to encourage interactions between alumni. Alumni’s primary reasons for attending Alumni Weekend are to reconnect with Imperial and to share Imperial with their friends and/or family. The latter suggests that they see Alumni Weekend as a social occasion.

**Outcome 7: Promote Alumni Services and Benefits and ways to support and get involved with the College.** There is scope to improve awareness of these services.Alumni were most aware of the online alumni networks and Alumni Visitor Centre and a quarter have used the latter. Fewer than half were aware of volunteering opportunities and library access. 15% of alumni feel very connected to Imperial, with most being happy with their current level of connection.

**Outcome 9: Increase the internal profile of the alumni community to staff and students.** Whilst this outcome can only be accurately assessed by asking staff and students about their awareness of alumni, the evaluation provides some evidence of positive interactions between staff or students and alumni in the form of positive comments from Festival participants and volunteers about their engagement with alumni. There are some examples of participants enjoying the questions and points alumni raised about particular research projects or technologies.

**Outcome 11: Gain 70% Net Promoters scoring of 7 and above.** This outcome was achieved as 70% of alumni gave Alumni Weekend a net promoters score of 7 or above suggesting that they were highly likely to recommend Alumni Weekend to another alumnus. Most alumni rated Alumni Weekend positively, with 80% giving it above average ratings overall and in terms of value for money. Alumni were most likely to be dissatisfied with arrangements for tours, including alumni-only tours, where places were limited, and Festival tours, where the sign-up process was criticised. 73% said that Alumni Weekend makes them feel valued as an Imperial alumnus and 73% are likely to attend Alumni Weekend in the future.

## Learning points

The evaluation provides evidence that Imperial Festival 2016 was successful event, which met most of its intended outcomes and strategic objectives and was enjoyed by visitors, participants and volunteers alike. The findings also identified learning points in a number of areas of Festival organisation and programming which are summarised below as considerations for the future.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Area of learning | Points to consider |
| *Information and support for visitors* | Delineate more clearly between activities for children and those for adults in programming.  Provide information in the Printed and Online Programmes about the location of key stands or exhibits and activities for particular age groups.  Allocate a cohort of volunteers the role of ‘human signposts’, identify them and provide them with detailed information about Zone contents and activities for particular age groups.  Ensure all volunteers are aware of the location of key activities or stands (especially those that are mentioned in Festival publicity).  Ensure all volunteers know the location of amenities such as toilets, somewhere to buy drinks without having to queue for food etc. |
| *Managing visitor flow and numbers* | Locate Zones that are most likely to appeal to the main visitor group (i.e. families with young children) in the largest spaces.  Review the site layout to optimise visitor flow, reduce overcrowding in some areas and minimise empty or ‘wasted’ areas.  Improve and increase signage for all Zones, especially those located away from the ‘centre’ of the Festival.  Review the layout within Zones to ensure there is space for visitors to congregate around all stands and exhibits.  Consider having a specific tour registration point that is separate from the Info Tent to minimise congestion around the latter.  Provide drinks only refreshment outlets to reduce queues at main food stands. |
| *Content for a varied audience* | Schedule activities when they are most likely to appeal to specific age groups.  Continue to offer activities aimed at families but ensure there is sufficient content for adults and teenagers and that participants actively engage these groups.  Ensure content aimed at older visitors is clearly identified and as visible as family-friendly activities.  Consider evening opening to attract and engage more adults. |
| *Experience for participants, volunteers and support staff* | Review deployment of volunteers to ensure that they are all kept fully occupied and feel useful.  Ensure volunteers with knowledge of Imperial and the campus are allocated to relevant roles e.g. human sign posts, Info Tent, Volunteer registration.  Provide a more detailed general briefing to volunteers, including visitor FAQs.  Ensure Zone supervisors are fully briefed and they provide effective and detailed Zone specific briefings to the volunteers that they supervise.  Enable all participants to access water throughout the day.  Enforce deadlines for specification of technical and AV requirements.  Allow volunteers and participants access to food and drink after the formal Festival closing time or ensure that they have shift patterns and/or queue for foods are reduced so that they can access food and drink when the Festival is open. |

Alumni Weekend learning

There were also some learning points for Alumni Weekend, which can be summarised as:

* Provide more information for Alumni Weekend attendees to enable them to appreciate fully the entire range of benefits and activities that are offered as part of the Weekend and distinguish clearly between these and Imperial Festival.
* Ensure Alumni Weekend attendees understand the limited numbers and other constraints (e.g. age limits and accessibility) for alumni-only tours.
* Increase the visibility of the Alumni Showcase to help alumni understand what it is and to encourage engagement with the contents.
* Provide greater support to facilitate networking among alumni.
* Survey the entire alumni population to understand their understanding and views about the Imperial Alumni offering, including Alumni weekend and Imperial Festival, and their sense of connection to Imperial.

## General conclusion

This evaluation of Imperial Festival 2016 provides evidence that it was a highly successful event, with evidence that it is achieving its intended outcomes and strategic objectives. The Festival was highly rated by visitors of all ages and also delivered a range of positive outcomes for participants and volunteers, with the latter welcoming the introduction of a Volunteer Zone and dedicated volunteer registration area. The findings presented in this report show that Imperial Festival has developed considerable momentum over its first five years to become an effective public engagement activity that is widening public understanding and public impacts of Imperial research. The Festival presents Imperial in a very positive light and is improving public, staff and student understanding of Imperial and its research, particularly around Imperial’s willingness to engage with the public and the applied nature and variety of research it undertakes. Significant impacts for Imperial staff and students are the feelings of pride and community generated by the Festival and the connections that it enables them to make with immediate colleagues and others.

A majority of visitors, participants and volunteers regard Imperial Festival to be a successful, well-organised event. It should continue in future years with a clear plan for managing the large numbers of visitors and ensuring all audience groups feel there is something for them in the Festival contents.

1. Based on organiser observations [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/newsandeventspggrp/imperialcollege/newssummary/news_10-5-2016-15-58-21> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/volunteering/imperial-plus [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.imperial.ac.uk/be-inspired/student-recruitment-and-outreach/schools-and-colleges/students/on-campus-activities/stem-potential-programme/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/measuring-outcomes/generic-learning-outcomes [↑](#footnote-ref-5)