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**Imperial Festival 2015**

**Final Evaluation Report**

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# Introduction

## Imperial Festival

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 fourth Imperial Festival took place on Friday 8, Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 May 2015 and was expanded from previous years. Friday was a Schools Day attended by over 100 primary school children with their teachers from five schools. Saturday and Sunday saw the Festival being open for two full public days for the first time, with an estimated 15,000 plus visitors[[1]](#footnote-1). The Alumni Weekend also took place on the Saturday and Sunday and, according the to the Alumni weekend website[[2]](#footnote-2) was attended by nearly 1000 alumni and guests.

Imperial Festival 2015 was evaluated by Jenesys Associates Ltd and their findings are documented in this report.

## Evaluation aims

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

* Pupils and teachers who visit Schools Day
* Public visitors to the Festival with no affiliation to Imperial
* Imperial staff and students who visit the Festival
* Imperial staff, students and others involved in delivery of the Festival
* Festival volunteers
* Alumni and their guests who visit the Festival and/or Alumni Weekend

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

## Evaluation methodology

**Visitor survey**

A self-completion e-survey for Festival visitors was made available via the Festival website. 344 valid responses were received between 9 and 30 May from visitors in all the categories described above. 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 exclusive activities.

**Schools Day questionnaires**

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

**Activity provider survey**

210 staff, students and others who delivered activities at the Festival completed an e-survey between 12 and 30 May.

**Festival volunteer survey**

79 Festival volunteers completed an e-survey between 12 and 30 May.

**Visitor entry and exit interviews**

Short face-to-face interviews were conducted with 200 visitor groups to find out how they heard about Imperial Festival and why they were attending. Interviews were recorded for analysis.

51 individual visitors were interviewed on leaving the Festival. These interviews complemented the visitor survey by capturing more detailed information about visitors’ reasons for their opinions and reactions to the Festival. They were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

**Primary data collection and analysis**

Survey data were collected using Qualtrics survey distribution software. The data from the interviews and the answers to open survey questions were coded and analysed using ‘MaxQDA’ software and reviewed to identify interesting quotes. Visitors’ quotes are shown in *blue* and activity providers’ or volunteers’ quotes are in *red*. Adult members of the public are referred to as *Public visitor* in their quotes, with age ranges being shown for public visitors who were age under 18.

**Secondary data**

20 pieces of email feedback to the organisers of Imperial Festival were read to inform the analysis of the evaluation findings and ensure they were consistent with evaluation and interview feedback. The content of 535 tweets made between 9 and 12 May using the official Imperial Festival hashtag were also reviewed.

**Reporting**

All data in this report have been anonymised. Survey respondents were not forced to answer all questions and 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.

Sections 2and 3 document Imperial Festival’s impacts on visitors and staff, students and volunteers involved in delivery of the Festival. Section 4 describes the demographics, backgrounds and motivations of Festival visitors and Section 5 examines their experiences and opinions of the Festival. Section 6 summarises the backgrounds of staff, students and volunteers involved in delivery of the Festival, with their experiences and opinions forming Section 7. Sections 8 and 9 outline feedback about the Alumni Weekend and Schools Day respectively. Section 10 reviews Twitter response to the Festival. Section 11 presents the conclusions from the evaluation.

# What impacts did Imperial Festival 2015 have on visitors?

The section analyses the impacts that Imperial Festival had on all types of visitors.

## Desired outcomes for visitors

Survey respondents reported the extent to which the Festival had impacts in four areas based on the Festival’s published desired outcomes for visitors.

The greatest impact was *increased my understanding of research carried out at Imperial,* which 90% (304) of respondents said had increased ‘A lot’ (65%) or ‘A little’ (25%). 96% of public visitors (i.e. those with no Imperial affiliation) reported ‘A lot’ or ‘A little’ for this statement.

86% (291) of all visitors reported that Imperial Festival had *developed my interest in science* ‘A little’ or ‘A lot’. The equivalent figure for public visitors was 92%. It is worth noting that 94% of public visitors reported that they already like or love science, indicating that this outcome was achieved for visitors with a range of science interests and backgrounds.

85% (287) of all visitors reported that Imperial Festival had *increased my general understanding of Imperial* ‘A little’ or ‘A lot’. The equivalent figure for public visitors was 94%.

77% (254) of all visitors reported that Imperial Festival had *made me want to find out more about Imperial* ‘A little’ or ‘A lot’. The equivalent figure for public visitors was 89%.

**Visitor impacts of Imperial Festival 2015 (n= 330 to 338)**

## Visitors’ learning

The survey asked visitors if they had learned anything new at Imperial Festival. 95% of all visitors and 93% of public visitors answered ‘yes’. These included alumni, current students and staff and public visitors with a background interest in sciences.

**Visitors’ learning from Imperial Festival (n= 330)**

Visitors in all categories were able to describe what they learned, including in some cases practical applications of science or technology.

*De-coding, seeing how insects and robots see, sight controlled stuff. (Public visitor under -12)*

*Augmented reality and how it could be useful in surgery. Learned from one of the booths on Queen’s Lawn. (Undergraduate student)*

*About current applications of quadcopters like travelling to inaccessible locations. Also about current computer vision applications such as real-time reconstruction of a previously-taken x-ray images while looking at the organ that it represents. For example, looking at a person's head with the Oculus Rift overlaps the image with the x-ray image allowing for real-time x-ray image according the gaze direction. (Postgraduate student)*

*How civil engineers are helping people have safer drinking water. How the effect of explosions can be measured in labs. How using NMR of urine can help diagnose diseases. Lots and lots more! (Imperial staff)*

*Where do I start? Cosmology with Roberto Trotta (bought his book - it's beautiful), fluid dynamics in blood vessels, desalinating drinking water in Bangladesh and so much more inspiring work. (Public visitor)*

*How does leftover food get processed into compost, but even more interesting, what made the mobile composting unit interesting for the companies that organize big events, and why it was originally built as mobile unit? (Public visitor)*

*About the possibility of developing very individual treatments for cancer (all the details of which I haven't retained, I'm afraid). They were very well explained in the Cancer Research UK dance performance, and I felt that I grasped them at the time. (Public visitor)*

## Visitors’ future intentions

99% (282) of visitors selected ‘Yes’ (86%) or ‘Maybe’ when asked if they would come to another Imperial Festival, suggesting that they would visit in future years.

98% (279) indicated their intention to come another similar event, by selecting ‘Yes’ or ‘Maybe’ in response to this question.

On the same basis, 99% (282) would recommend Imperial Festival.

**Visitors intentions about Imperial Festival (n=285)**

In interview, visitors suggested that they would be most likely to recommend the Festival to anyone interested in science and anyone looking for an entertaining day out, especially schools and those with children.

*Everybody, but particularly to secondary school students so that they can see the benefits of science and to develop their enthusiasm for the subject. (Imperial staff)*

*Everyone - that is the key selling point - there is something for everyone. (Public visitor)*

*Friends with children and friends with an inquisitive mind that does not wish to grow up. (Public visitor)*

*Friends, colleagues, people with children (our 2 year old enjoyed it) - certainly not just people who seem to be interested in science. This is a brilliant festival for everyone. (Public visitor)*

*Friends, family and kid´s school. My five year old daughter asked if she could take a copy of the program to school for "show and tell". (Imperial staff)*

*I have already recommended the festival to other parents at my daughter's school. I have also passed on the word about it to people at my work. I would encourage other friends and colleagues whom I thought might find it interesting, or who have kids who might like it, to go along to the next one. (Alumnus)*

# What impacts did Imperial Festival 2015 have on delivery participants?

This section summarises Imperial Festival’s impacts on Activity Providers and Volunteers. Both groups were asked to describe the Festival’s impact on them and their opinions of Imperial. Activity Providers were also asked about impacts on their research and their opinions of public engagement.

## Personal impacts

For Activity Providers, the most commonly reported personal impacts were a desire to undertake more public engagement or outreach in the future, including participating in future Imperial Festivals.

*The incentive to do it again and engage in further outreach. (Academic staff)*

*I would definitely do this again. It has also encouraged me to start a blog. (Academic staff)*

*I'm now encouraged to be more involved in public engagement and have already volunteered to be involved in another event. (Non-academic staff)*

*More likely to engage with the public about science and to actively look out for opportunities/ create them. (Postgraduate student)*

*I am more likely to volunteer for similar events in the future if I get the opportunity. (Undergraduate student)*

Another common personal impact for Activity Providers (mainly students) was gaining communication skills and experience.

*I learnt lots about what works and doesn't work in communication and science festivals! (Non-academic staff)*

*I gained better skills in communicating my project to a variety of audiences from kids to professors. (Postgraduate student)*

*The experience and practice will help me in the future for other communication events, and it will have a positive impact on my CV. It has made me more confident talking to people about what I do. (Postgraduate student)*

Activity Providers also reported that Imperial Festival had been enjoyable and encouraged them to think about how others view their research.

The most commonly reported personal impact for Volunteers was feeling proud or motivated by their involvement in Imperial Festival.

*As in previous years, I did feel proud to work here and happy to be surrounded by such clever, enthusiastic and friendly people. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*Inspired me and made me proud to work at Imperial. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*Kind of re-discovering the basics of science and the motivating feeling that you are making a difference by being involved in research. (Academic staff Volunteer)*

Other personal impacts for Volunteers were greater understanding of the research work done at Imperial, and enjoying the experience.

## Opinions of Imperial

Other than Activity Providers and Volunteers who reported no change in their opinions of Imperial, most descriptions of these impacts were positive, with references to feeling proud or pleased that Imperial holds the Festival.

Descriptions from Activity Providers include:

*Brilliant idea, excellent delivery. I am very happy to be part of the College's ambassador for communicating science in this event! (Academic staff)*

*Better opinion in trying to engage with public and offer role models to younger people. (Academic staff)*

*An organisation which is changing and actively trying to embed public engagement. (Non-academic staff)*

*I didn't know Imperial had so much star power! So many people came! (Postgraduate student)*

*Impressed me that so much effort was put into such an event. Great that a research-based university understands the value of public engagement. (Postgraduate student)*

*Betters my opinion as I like that the College cares how the public perceives science and wants to take responsibility for inciting passion in the next generations. (Postgraduate student)*

Descriptions from Volunteers include:

*The commitment shown by the college in putting up this free festival on this scale for the public is impressive. (Academic staff Volunteer)*

*Extra pride in Imperial - it was lovely to be able to invite family members along and them to see and enjoy where I work. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*I am pleased to see that Imperial hosts such an event. It shows that the College wants to showcase its work and engage with the wider public. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*It has improved it, as previously I had the view that the institution was slightly introvert, so it was fantastic to see such a big push to showcase the work done here. (Postgraduate student Volunteer)*

*I always thought Imperial as a top institution but I also now think it is very inclusive of the general public. (Postgraduate student Volunteer)*

## Impacts on research

When asked about impacts on their research, answers from Activity Providers varied from ‘nothing’ (the most common answer) to answers that can be categorised as obtaining different perspectives on their research, making potentially useful contacts and increasing the public’s awareness of their work.

*After witnessing the enthusiasm of the visitors for this work makes me want to pursue our research with renewed vigour. (Academic staff)*

*Better focus due to knowing that people or the public are expecting answers too. It is not just for us but for all of us. (Academic staff)*

*I met a few academic staff that were interested in making collaborations and that I’ve kept in contact with. (Postgraduate student)*

Activity Providers also described how participating in Imperial Festival strengthened the sense of team working among research groups; provided junior team members with public engagement experience; connected their research groups to others; or raised their profile, including with existing or potential funders.

*It has brought my research group together and helped us connect with partner research group in physics. (Academic staff)*

*It is important to show our sponsors that we are committed not only to perform our research but to communicate it to the public efficiently. The group is quite delighted to have participated in this event. (Academic staff)*

*It was a fun activity to take part in together. I got to know some people in my department better by working with them at the festival. (Academic staff)*

*It is important to show sponsors that we are committed not only to perform our research but to communicate it to the public efficiently. The group is quite delighted to have participated in this event. (Academic staff)*

*A few colleagues have not been involved in public outreach before, and have told me how much they enjoyed it. I think they will be more likely to be involved in more events in the future. (Postgraduate student)*

A few Activity Providers described very specific or direct research impacts, for example:

*It allowed an undergrad (MEng) to conduct a user study for his final year dissertation. This is the biggest impact of the weekend from my perspective. (Academic staff)*

*Our display creation generated great lab models for future use. (Academic staff)*

*It provided us with feedback on the tool presented. (Academic staff)*

*We got great feedback, some of which will be written up into academic papers. (Non-academic staff)*

## Impacts on opinions about Public Engagement

Most Activity Providers reported that Imperial Festival had an impact on their view about public engagement, although around one-third indicated that it had no impact because they are already committed to engagement.

The most common impact was feeling positive about public engagement.

*I definitely vote for public engagement! It is fun and very rewarding when you stimulate views and ideas about how things work in your body. (Academic staff)*

*Great, I knew previously that it is worth it and rewarding, and this reinforced that. (Non-academic staff)*

*I’m not usually very keen in doing public engagement, but it was fun to see people from different ages looking at the topics. (Postgraduate student)*

Some Activity Providers described learning about the amount and range of public interest that there is in research amongst the audience for Imperial Festival.

*I was very impressed of how interested the public was. (Academic staff)*

*The public that came to visit the Festival were very curious and enthusiastic to learn. (Academic staff)*

*I think that the public are far more interested than I would have expected. (Undergraduate student)*

Others reported that the Festival had stimulated some thinking about the make-up of audiences for public engagement, with some highlighting the need to be inclusive and the importance of attracting a diverse audience.

*I still feel that public engagement often reaches largely those who are already interested, already have lots of access to information, or already knew quite a lot about the subject. (Academic staff)*

*Whilst I think that the festival is a great way of doing PE, inclusion is still an issue, most people knew a lot about science, it could be worth doing a mini-tour around London (in say community centres) to take science to people who can't travel. (Non-academic staff)*

Student Activity Providers indicated that participating in Imperial Festival had raised their awareness of the significance or importance of public engagement.

*I really consider public engagement as being part of science now. (Postgraduate student)*

*I think it’s one of the most important aspects of science development. (Postgraduate student)*

*I was able to learn first-hand how important this is. The public is relying more and more on media to learn about new research, but this way was more interactive and will leave a more lasting impact. (Undergraduate student)*

## Delivery participants’ future intentions

A majority of participants were positive about their future intentions in relation to Imperial Festival.

As shown in the graphs below and overleaf, 99% (282) of Activity Providers and 98% of Volunteers selected ‘Yes’ or ‘Maybe’ when asked if they would take part in another Imperial Festival. 100% (282) of Activity Providers and 99% of Volunteers selected ‘Yes’ or ‘Maybe’ when asked if they would recommend taking part to a peer or colleague.

**Activity Provider intentions about Imperial Festival (n=225)**

**Volunteer intentions about Imperial Festival (n=73)**

# Who visited Imperial Festival 2015?

This section documents the demographics and backgrounds of visitors to Imperial Festival, including their reasons for attending and which elements or areas of the Festival they engaged with or saw.

## Visitor demographics

***Visitor categories***

344 respondents completed the Festival visitor feedback survey. 41% (141) were members of the public. 28% (96) were alumni, 30% (103) were current Imperial staff or students.

**Visitor categories (n=344)**

***Age of visitors***

311 visitors reported their age. 6% (18) were age under 18. 46% (144) were age between 25 and 44, with 37% (84) being younger and 27% (85) older than this age range. Alumni were on average older than the whole cohort, with 48% reporting that they were 45 or above.

**Visitor ages (n=311)**

***Gender of visitors***

Overall, the gender of visitors was fairly evenly split, with 50% (152) being female and 47% (144) being male and 3% (8) not saying. Most alumni (66%) who reported their gender were male.

***Composition of visitor groups***

330 visitors identified their visitor groups, with some selecting more than one category. The most common answer was ‘Family’ which was reported by 41% (130) of respondents. A further 11% (36) came with groups that comprised friends and family, indicating that over half (52%) of visitors come with their families and confirming the evaluators’ observations of visitor groups. Most of those who selected ‘Other’ were alumni who came with other Imperial alumni.

**Visitor Groups (n=330)**

## Response to Festival publicity

324 visitors selected the main way they heard about Imperial Festival. Generally, the most common answer was ‘Word of mouth’ which was selected by 28% (91) of respondents. 20% (65) had previously been to Imperial Festival. The most common descriptions of ‘Other’ were:

* For the public: an event mailing or listing such as UrbanExplorer, TimeOut or Londonist, or just coming across the Festival
* For Alumni: Alumni newsletter
* Generally: A connectionto Imperial, e.g. 1851 circle or Friends of Imperial

**How visitors heard about Imperial Festival (n=324)**

These responses were mirrored in the answers given in entry interviews where, for public visitors, the most common answers were: word of mouth (especially from teachers or schools for family groups); having been before; and seeing the Festival from Exhibition Road.

*I was looking for interesting stuff for the weekend and saw this on an UrbanExplorer email. It seems to fit the bill by being about entertainment and something a bit interesting. (Family group)*

*We just happened to walk by and it look quite interesting, plus it’s free. We’re not really sure what it is but it looks fun. Two of us quite like science and they said at the gate we would see some. (Adult group)*

*We came two years ago – I love science. And I thought then the kids were a bit young. This time they are 8 and 10 and I think they’ll get much more out of it. (Family group)*

*The kids heard about it at school. Her teacher said they had to come – in a nice way meaning it was unmissable. My husband is an engineer so he is looking forward to it too. (Family group)*

## Motivations for visiting Imperial Festival

In entry and exit interviews, visitors were asked why they had come to Festival. For families, including those of alumni and Imperial staff and students, the main reason was to be entertained and learn at the same time. Specifically, family groups were looking for activities to entertain young children and teach older children something about science and university, but they also mentioned that it was good to have things to see for all age groups.

*It was on UrbanExplorers and we just thought it would be great for the children. They are 4, 6 and 9 so I am hoping there is something for littlies. But it looks fun from here so I think we’ll be fine. (Family group)*

*He [a 13 year old] is really keen on science – mainly physics. The rest of us are quite interested too, I suppose. We came last year and had a great time as a family and learned lots too. (Family group)*

*Entertainment I suppose. We were just walking around the area and I remembered one of the other parents at school said something about it. We are three generations and the kids range from 7 to 14 in age, so some are just thinking about university and it will be good for them. I think we are hoping there will be something for all of us – including food. (Friends and family group)*

Public visitors without children reported that they were attending because of an interest in in science or because they just liked the idea of a Festival. A number of these indicated that they were not really sure about the specific nature of Imperial Festival.

*To be honest, I hadn’t realised it was a university until you said. I don’t think any of us knew what Imperial meant but someone gave us a flier as we were walking along the road. That’s quite a cool idea a university doing a festival. We don’t really know what to expect – something to eat, drink and see I expect. (Adult group)*

*I am interested in science and brought her along as I wanted to come last year, but couldn’t. It’s good that universities are being more open and letting the public see what they do, after all our taxes fund a lot of the stuff they do. (Adult group)*

*The words free and festival together are always appealing. We don’t have any expectations but thought it was worth looking at. I kind of know what Imperial College is but none of the others do, so it’s quite intriguing to find out why they are doing a festival. (Adult group)*

Alumni and Imperial staff and students indicated that they were keen to find out about the research and work that Imperial is doing and to share it with their families. Many also described feeling proud or pleased by Imperial running such a large-scale public event.

*I have brought my grandson to the Festival because he enjoys science at school and said he wanted to come, but I am also keen to see the College now, especially what my old Department is doing. So that’s why we are here. And this may sound sentimental, as I haven’t really kept in touch with the College, but I am quite proud to see them doing something like this. (Alumnus)*

*I work here in admin and just wanted my family to see where I work as somewhere interesting and exciting. The Festival ticks the bill and I am enjoying showing it off. (Imperial staff)*

*It makes where we work seem more exciting and interesting. I come to find out what parts of the Colleges that I never see are up to. I am quite proud of working here. (Imperial staff)*

*We should be revising, but we had to come. How many other students get a chance to see their university do something like the festival? It’s a special opportunity for Imperial students and makes me proud of my university. (Imperial student)*

***Holding Imperial Festival and Alumni Weekend simultaneously***

77 alumni who responded to the visitor survey reported how, if at all, holding the Alumni Weekend and Imperial Festival together affected their decision to attend either event. Their answers were categorised as shown in this table.

**Effect of holding Imperial Festival and Alumni Weekend simultaneously (n=77)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Answer Category | Number (n=) |
| More likely to attend | 55 |
| No influence on decision | 15 |
| Less likely | 3 |
| Not sure | 4 |

Typical comments from Alumni who were more likely to attend if these events are held concurrently emphasised the benefit of having activities for family members to enjoy alongside a dedicated programme for alumni.

*Was great to feel part of the festival but have a dedicated area and activities for alumni - dont change it! (Alumnus)*

*Having the Alumni hub was a good base to explore the Festival and I would not have gone to an Alumni weekend without the Festival (and haven't done for the last 30 years). Also I wouldn't have travelled up to the Festival without having the Alumni hub available. In other words, I wouldn't have come if they were not together. (Alumnus)*

*The 2 events together caused me to attend. I could bring my grandchildren as well as enjoy the facilities and opportunities provided to alumni. (Alumnus)*

*If the Alumni Weekend had taken place on a separate weekend, I would have been unlikely to attend it. Having it on the same weekend as the Imperial Festival worked really well and gave people more to do. (Alumnus)*

Alumni who live outside London also indicated that having the events at the same time was more convenient for travel.

*It means I attend both events, requiring only one journey to London, rather than just one event. (Alumnus)*

*Very suitable for people who live outside the UK; I needed to arrange a weekend trip to London. My main target was the Alumni Weekend, but like that I could also enjoy the Imperial Festival. Based on some conversations with other alumni I suspect it was other way round for most. (Alumnus)*

Alumni who said they were less likely to attend when the events are held concurrently indicated they did not have sufficient time to appreciate both events fully and felt that there was some confusion between the separate programmes.

Alumni who were not sure if the scheduling had an effect on their attendance indicated that they had not realised that there were two events happening at the same time. All of these respondents reported that they only attended Imperial Festival and not the Alumni Weekend.

## Visitors’ participation in the Festival

333 visitors selected activities that they had done or seen at the Festival. As shown in the graph below, the most common answer was the ‘Research Zone’ which was visited by 77% (256). Areas that were remote from the Research Zone or Festival main entrance such as ‘Superbug Zone’ and ‘Light Zone’ were visited by 31% (103) and 41% (136) of respondents respectively, suggesting that many visitors moved around the site.

The respondents who answered ‘Other’ comprised members of the public, who most commonly answered food, and alumni who described activities that were part of the Alumni Weekend, such as lunches, alumni tours and Alumni Hub activities for children.

**Visitor experience of Festival activities (n=333)**

## Background of public visitors

***Location of public visitors***

111 members of the public reported their home postcodes (if UK) or home location if outside UK. 60% (67) were located within London postcode boundaries. Their answers were categorised as shown in this graph. The ‘Other England’ includes postcodes in the East and West Midlands and South West.

**Home location of public visitors (n=111)**

***Previous experience of Imperial***

52% (64) of public visitors had not previously visited Imperial. The 48% (58) who had visited before described the nature of their prior visit or visits. 32% of previous visitors had been to an Imperial Festival. Most of those who selected ‘Other’ had visited to meet friends or family who work or study at Imperial, suggesting that they have a connection to Imperial.

**Reason for previous visit to Imperial (n =58)**

***Attitudes towards science***

127 public respondents of all ages answered when asked about their existing interest in science. 94% (120) indicated that they ‘liked’ or ‘loved’ it. All those who reported that they were neutral or disliked science were age 12 or over. These responses are consistent with the interview findings, where a majority of interview subjects reported that they or at least one other member of their visitor group is interested science, including a number of cases where those with an interest in science were children accompanied by adults who did not share that interest.

**Existing interest in science? (n=127)**

# What did visitors think of Imperial Festival 2015?

This section reports visitors’ opinions about and suggestions for the Festival

## Overall rating

339 visitors rated their overall opinion of Imperial Festival. They rated it highly, with 94% (319) selecting ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’. 3 respondents who rated the Festival as ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’ were: an Imperial Student critical of the removal of the Felix newspaper from the Festival site; a member of staff who requested the return of Friday evening opening for staff and students who cannot attend at the weekend and who can benefit from the networking; and an alumnus who felt the Festival could have been more professionally run and was uncertain of the event’s purpose.

**Visitors’ overall rating of Imperial Festival 2015 (n=339)**

The main explanation for visitors rating Imperial Festival positively was the child-friendly nature of the activities on offer. This is unsurprising, given that most survey respondents and observed visitor groups attended with children.

*I like the fact that it caters to young children as this serves as inspiration to them – more than you may realise. My son and daughter (8 and 7yrs) loved it! (Alumnus)*

*We were very impressed with our first visit to the festival, we ranged from 4 years to 54 years and all found activities and information to learn from and inspire us. The scientists were very passionate and informative and the 'hands on' experiments were most well received. (Public visitor)*

*I bought my 9 year old daughter to try and inspire her regarding what science and engineering is all about and she thoroughly enjoyed it. So many hands on activities and she was exhausted by the end of the day and really understands now how fun science can be! (Public visitor)*

*It is my favourite free event in London. Totally inspiring and accessible for all ages. My children love the chance to see and interact with science. I also love the fact the building and staff are so open and friendly. (Public visitor)*

*I have attended the previous years and this was by far the best. Fantastic engagement from physical and life sciences. My 5 year old said he wants to be a scientist after this event as he thoroughly enjoyed the experiments and asked what experiments I do at work, which was challenging to answer… (Imperial staff)*

*I liked it all – it was exciting and I learned about snot. (Public visitor under 12)*

*It was wicked. I’d like to come here and learn. (Public visitor 12 to 17)*

The joint next most common explanations for visitors’ positive ratings were the variety of research activities on show and the opportunity to interact with professional researchers.

*A brilliant mixture of every aspect of imperial's research, encompassing all departments. Having never visited before it was the perfect introduction to the university and I hope it is to be put on again. (Public visitor)*

*I was really impressed by the breadth of Imperial research shown, and the enthusiasm of the researchers demonstrating. And there was a lovely relaxed, fun atmosphere. Everything was pitched well, both for my three year old son to have fun, while my partner and I could find out about the research in more detail. Had us all entertained, and our group ages ranged from 0 to 67. Now my son's favourite phrase is 'let the experiments begin’. (Public visitor)*

*It's a wonderful festival. You can't help but be impressed by all these smart, enthusiastic young students and researchers, eager to share their knowledge and research with you the visitor -- and doing so quite brilliantly, talking about topics that are absolutely captivating.. This is the sort of event that gives you hope for the future of the world! (Public visitor)*

*So much science to choose from. The staff and students were all very easy to talk to. It helped cure some curiosity I had about other subjects than my own undergrad course and confirmed that I am still a Physicist I still enjoy talking about and listening to others talk about the subject even though I do not work in the field any more. (Alumnus)*

*I liked talking to the scientists best. They answered all my questions which was really good. I am going to tell everyone at school. (Public visitor under-12)*

Generally positive opinions were described in visitor interviews.

*Nothing specific it was all totally brilliant. We brought our boys aged 3 and 7. They loved it - as did we. There was a fantastic feel-good atmosphere and I was very impressed with how good all the helpers were with the children. Everyone was really informative and patient. (Public visitor)*

*There was so much to see and do and it was all presented at a very high standard. I was amazed at how much had been packed in and we only saw a fraction. (Imperial staff)*

*The sheer amount of stalls and experts was incredible. I learnt so much from very knowledgeable minds. (Imperial staff)*

*There was a great positive feeling about the event and I was pleased to see what is really a very exclusive establishment opening its arms to all comers. I am sure that many young people who visited will be enthused by science in general and Imperial in particular. (Public visitor)*

*Just lots of very interesting, interactive activities. My kids were very engaged. Helpful and friendly staff, relaxed atmosphere. My idea of a perfect family day out. (Alumnus)*

*A great day with lots to see and do. There was clearly a lot of pride in the work happening at Imperial College, with lots of thought put into the best way to visualise it for ordinary people like me. (Public visitor)*

## Information and navigation for visitors

85% (288) of visitors reported that they thought the Festival’s Printed Programme was ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’, with 8% reporting ‘Don’t know’, suggesting that they had not used the Printed Programme.

Over half of visitors (57%, 193) rated the Online Interactive Programme, with a majority of these (159) rating it as ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’.

80% (271) 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.

**Ratings of Festival programmes and ease of navigation (n=339)**

Despite a majority of visitors rating the ease of finding their way around as above average, survey suggestions and interview feedback implied that signage could be improved in two areas. Firstly, it was pointed out that all areas of the Festival need to be clearly and visibly signposted, particularly areas that are sited away from Queen’s Lawn, such as the Superbug and Light Zones.

*The layout was a bit confusing. It would be good to have a big map as you come in to the site. Listening to people in the food queue, I think that we missed a couple of good stands about light. (Imperial staff)*

*Finding one's way around the Festival is not very easy; instead of having people rely on maps, each zone should have a large obvious sign or balloon so if someone was wondering ‘Where is the Superbug Zone?’ they would be able to just look up and see the sign across the courtyard. (Imperial student)*

*I missed the Explore section and only found it as we were leaving - I thought it was in the activity tent rather than the room in the building next door. That was a bit of a shame. Better signposting on the ground is needed I think. (Public visitor)*

*I lost my way to the marquee, hadn't realised how huge the campus is. More signs, please and make them huge. (Public visitor)*

Secondly in relation to signage , visitors reported that the names and titles of individual stands need to be accurate and suggested that they should reflect the subject matter and target audience as precisely as possible.

*It was sometimes difficult to catch the message of the different stands from their names - too scientific, more explanations in plain English please. Also, titles of the stands didn't always match the content very well e.g. ‘Baby's first home video’ wasn't really about that which equals disappointment. (Public visitor)*

*I think that the biggest problem I had was not knowing the subject matter from the published stand name or the audience a particular stand was aimed at until I had visited it. (Alumnus)*

*To be honest some of the names of the stands weren’t always quite in synch with the subjects. I guess that sometimes happens when you have to make everything sound exciting. But it can be disappointing when it’s not what you think. Like 3D printers being in the Robot Zone – they are printers, not robots. (Public visitor)*

*I would also suggest that each stall has a clearer sign showing precisely what is on it and who it is aimed at; too often I was very confused and didn't always want to have to ask the volunteers and explainers for every single stall. (Imperial student)*

## Visitors’ interaction with Imperial staff and students

Visitors reported that Imperial staff and students provided clear explanations about their work, with 88% (298) rating this aspect as ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’.

Staff and student responses to visitors’ questions were also highly rated, with 87% (295) rating this aspect as ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’.

**Clarity of Imperial staff’ and students’ explanations about their work (n=339)**

As described in section 4.1 above, the opportunity to interact with professional researchers was deemed to be one of Imperial Festival’s key success factors. However, in their interviews and survey suggestions, visitors also emphasised the importance of ensuring that the quality of these interactions is consistent. They emphasised the need to ensure that all staff and students who present on stands are trained to the highest possible standard in communication and are able to interact with all types of publics, including those with different levels of background knowledge, thus optimising audience engagement and learning for all vistor categories and age groups.

*My main suggestion would be to give some guidance to explainers about being prepared to adapt their pitch to different audiences. While some were excellent at doing this, others weren't. My non-scientist husband found the same for himself, some explainers assumed he had some knowledge already, when he was completely ignorant about them. (Imperial staff)*

*If I had one suggestion, it would be about ensuring everyone gets the same training about presenting to the public as some researchers often dived into explaining the detail of the projects without a couple of sentences of context. (Public visitor)*

*There were several instances where the exhibitors were not able to explain things in a simple enough way for my non-science brain. I could bore you with six or seven examples of this, but I'll be gracious and stick with my conclusion: It is important to be able to not only put on a whizzy display, but also to help others understand what that display really means. (Public visitor)*

*Some of those at the stands seemed surprised I wanted to know about their science in greater depth than the ‘pretty’ or the ‘amazing’ and were slightly wrong-footed, ill-prepared even, when I asked for more detail. (Alumnus)*

## Visitors’ suggestions

In interviews and survey responses the most common suggestions from visitors were:

* Review the layout of the whole Festival to optimise use of available space and to ensure crowd flow is better managed
* Improve the layout and lighting in the Research Zone and Brain Zone
* Improve signage (see Section 5.2)
* Ensure that there is suffient in the programme to attract and engage adults and teenagers
* Improve aspects of the food and drink offering

Visitors’ comments about the Festival layout highlighted opportunities to fill empty areas and improve visitor flow and crowd management throughout the site, which were deemed particularly important if the Festival is to grow in the future:

*A focal point - central stage for key talks perhaps. It must be possible to make more use of the bar area. You could also create more buzz/infrastructure around food stalls. There was a large car park area to the side that was empty. (Public visitor)*

*More even distribution of popular activities, if you know what I mean. There were some crazily busy areas and some seemingly empty spaces like on the way to Superbugs or just after we came in. This implies that layout was thrown together and not thought through, although I am sure it wasn’t. It’s just an impression. (Public visitor)*

*There was a lot of crowding around the more popular items. Perhaps a filtering systems or larger spaces for the high level attractions. I am sure that professional festivals have this problem – perhaps you could talk to them or seek some design layout advice. (Public visitor)*

Visitors felt that the lighting and layout within the Research Zone and Brain Zone could be improved to optimise the appearance and use of space in those areas.

*The so called Brain Zone was a wasted opportunity and it just did not feel as though that space was a professionally planned as some others. Is it part of the bar? The fluorescent lighting probably doesn’t help its look and feel either. (Public visitor)*

*The main marquee is your flagship but it was overcrowded, dark and poorly laid out. It was not easy to make sense of what was going on there. (Former Imperial staff)*

*The large marquee had lots of empty space in the middle, with all the stands around the outside, but very close to each other. You couldn't get near them and if you did you couldn't hear or see what was going on. (Alumnus)*

*The Brain Zone had the feel of a village fete. It felt disjointed and randomly set out. (Public visitor)*

*Dotting things around the edge of the main marquee looks a little unprofessional, which does not properly reflect the enthusiasm of the staff and students on the stalls. It was also very dark. There must be designers who can advise on how to make the best use of the marquee, as someone told me it cannot be changed because it is used for graduation of students. (Public visitor)*

Visitors in all categories, including those who came with young children or in family groups, deemed it was important for Imperial Festival to offer activities for adults and teenagers, thus addressing the needs of all age groups.

*You could do with more material for older people; the balance was a bit too far in the kid direction this time (though providing more material for adults doesn't have to be at the expense of this). (Imperial student)*

*I wish there were more activities for adults. A lot of it seems to be aimed at children (which is fine) but maybe some thought could be given to adults, too - what about an adult-only hands-on workshop or an ‘after-hours’ festival opening. (Public visitor)*

*More marketing to wider audiences - seemed like loads of kids and families, but not necessarily many people my age - some of the activities were tailored specifically for kids, but less seemed appropriate for people of my age. (Imperial staff age 25 to 34)*

*It would be better maybe, in the research zone, if you had experiments and information about research science not only for the little kids, but for teens too. (Public visitor)*

Visitors suggested that the Festival’s refreshment offering should include more vegetarian, vegan and hot drink options. They also suggested there should be a dedicated hot drinks outlet alongside the food stalls and that the bar should be moved to the main food area.

*The bar was quite tucked away and it was a shame to be out of the sun. A "beer tent" or similar nearer the food stands would be great. (Imperial student)*

*My only suggestion is to have a tea / coffee stand amongst the food stalls. There were lots of nice alcoholic drinks on offer but as permanently tired parents in charge of small kids - caffeine is what we really needed. (Public visitor)*

Other common suggestions were to improve the registration process for tours; ensure every Department is represented (particularly the physical sciences); and make it easier for Imperial alumni to visit their former Departments.

# Who participated in the delivery of Imperial Festival 2015?

Imperial staff and students and Festival Volunteers provided information about their status and the aspects of the Festival that they were involved in delivering. Their feedback in this section is separated into Activity Providers and Volunteers, with the former covering all those who were involved in the presentation of talks, tours and workshops etc. and staffing and presenting on stands in the various Festival Zones.

## Participants’ status

As shown below, 51% (120) of Activity Providers were members of staff at Imperial and 31% (73) were Imperial postgraduate students, with 11% (26) being undergraduates. Those who selected ‘Other’ described themselves as project partners, relatives or alumni who helped to deliver particular activities or stands.

**Background of Activity Providers (n=235)**

A majority (73%, 58) of Festival Volunteers were non-academic staff members at Imperial. Those who answered ‘Other’ were mostly relatives or friends of Imperial staff.

**Background of Festival Volunteers (n=79)**

## Participants’ involvement in Imperial Festival

50% (118) of Activity Providers selected ‘Research Zone’, although respondents represented all areas of the Festival. Half of those who answered ‘Other’ described their involvement as ‘Engineering Playground’ (a term not in the programme or publicity) with the remainder describing Talkaoke, Hackathon, busking, media coverage or music/dance performance.

**Activity Providers’ involvement (n=235)**

Generally speaking and unsurprisingly, Volunteers were more likely than Activity Providers to be involved in a number of different aspects or areas of the Festival. The most common answers were ‘Info Tent’, experienced by 29% (22 volunteers) and ‘Other’, experienced by 26% (21) of Volunteers.

Most Volunteers who answered ‘Other’ were involved in activities that can be categorised as promotion, such as handing out fliers, standing at entrances, creating social media interest etc. Also included in descriptions of ‘Other’ were volunteering at Alumni Weekend, and supporting tours, performances or workshops.

**Festival Volunteers’ involvement (n=73)**

# What did delivery participants think of Imperial Festival 2015?

## Participants’ ratings

***Activity providers***

Activity Providers rated their overall experience of Imperial Festival highly, with 96% (220) rating it ‘Good’ or ‘Excellent’ i.e. above average. Respondents who answered ‘Poor’ reported that equipment was broken or stolen from their stands.

**Rating of Imperial Festival by Activity Providers (n=230)**

The main explanation for Activity Providers’ positive ratings was the enthusiastic and engaged response from visitors to the Festival.

*People were really into the two stands that I worked on, asked questions and the best parts were when I talked with individuals one on one. It was great to see so many people from different walks of life being interested in science and me being able to answer them some questions. (Postgraduate student)*

*Great interactions with the public, including children. A lot of very interesting and challenging questions! (Academic staff)*

*We had many visitors at our stand over the week end. And many exciting questions to answer. It was exhilarating to see the enthusiasm of the public across all age groups and walks of life. (Academic staff)*

*We had a great range of people coming to our stall, of all ages, genders, ethnicities and levels of prior knowledge, and it was great to see them all interacting in different ways with the volunteers and activities, whether discussing specific aspects of our work. (Non-academic staff)*

*Seeing so many people interested and excited ("fascinating" was one of the most common words used to describe our project) in what you are doing made me very enthusiastic, especially because most of them asked many questions not only strictly related to our project, but more generally, which is something we wanted to encourage. (Undergraduate student)*

Other reasons for Activity Provider’s positive ratings were: the helpfulness of Festival Volunteers and the variety of research and activities seen at the Festival.

Activity Providers also reported what delighted and surprised them about Imperial Festival. In line with the explanations given for their positive rating, the most common answer was the response from visitors, followed by the number of visitors/ size of crowds and the variety of research on display.

***Volunteers***

85% (67) Volunteers also rated Imperial Festival above average. The 4% who rated the Festival below average explained that they felt poorly briefed or unclear about the role they were supposed to perform. The need for clear briefings and clearly defined roles was also reported by Volunteers who rated the Festival highly, and is described in the Suggestions section below.

**Rating of Imperial Festival by Volunteers (n=79)**

The main explanation for Volunteers’ positive ratings of Imperial Festival was enjoyment and satisfaction.

*I loved being a part of the day - amazing atmosphere among visitors and volunteers. (Non-academic staff)*

*Had a lot of fun and enjoyed helping people out. (Postgraduate student)*

*It was very enjoyable and satisfying to see how people and families enjoyed the Festival. (Undergraduate student)*

When asked what delighted and surprised them about Imperial Festival, Volunteers highlighted the Festival atmosphere and the enjoyment and interest shown by visitors.

*The atmosphere, the enthusiasm of other volunteers. (Academic staff Volunteer)*

*A lot of visitors, particularly those with families, really did seem to be having a fantastic time and this was reflected in the comments I received from visitors themselves. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*The engagement/reactions of the public to exhibits (children especially) and seeing students present their projects. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*The enthusiasm and number of visitors over the whole weekend - especially on Sunday as I wasn't sure how many would attend given the change in format. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*In the Robot Zone both adults and children were crowding around and totally engaged. The number of people attending was the best ever. (Postgraduate student Volunteer)*

## Participants’ suggestions

***Activity Providers***

Activity Providers identified some areas for improvement. The most common of these were:

* Availability of food and drink for them, including distribution of vouchers
* Aspects of the Research Zone
* Activities/content for adults and older children

Some Activity Providers reported difficulty in obtaining food vouchers or problems with the time when they could obtain food or limits to the type of food and drinks available with vouchers. In the latter cases, suggestions focused on increasing the vegan or vegetarian food options and hot drinks being available in exchange for vouchers.

*I had to buy my own food since we weren't given enough vouchers and no one around could advise where to get more. (Postgraduate student)*

*The only thing I would improve was food and drink tokens for staff at the Festival, these weren't available for quite a while on Saturday and as a result some people on early shifts didn't get any food. (Non-academic staff)*

*Catering for the volunteers was a right pain as the food /drink coupons were not always useable and no-one seemed to redeem the drinks one for a tea on both days, (Academic staff)*

*The Imperial Cafe was closed before the end of the Festival so I couldn't use my volunteer food voucher there as I had the last shift on Sunday. (Postgraduate student)*

*The food timings were a problem as we could not eat at a convenient time when the coupon could be used and this did not suit our rota. There should not be a time limit on when the coupons should be used. (Other activity provider)*

Activity Providers suggested that the layout and lighting in the Research Zone should be improved to create a more professional appearance and to ensure individual stands could be seen properly by visitors.

*The Lighting could be much better. I understand this year the main tent had a double roofing blocking off the natural light. The lighting provided was dull and in some places did not light up at all. (Academic staff)*

*The marquee looked a bit empty in some parts and too crammed –in in others. This is a very big space and it didn't seem fully exploited. (Non-academic staff)*

*The layout of the Research Zone made it feel very empty and cavernous at times. While in 2014 we were very bunched up, this year seems to have swung to the other extreme. (Postgraduate student)*

*I did think though that the positioning/signposting of the different stations within the research zone could have been improved. Also, it got very hot (but was very dark) within that marquee at one stage! (Undergraduate student)*

Activity Providers recognised the importance of families with young children as an audience for Imperial Festival, but they also stressed the need to attract and engage older children and adults too.

*I realise that gearing things toward kids brings in better crowds but it would be nice if some of it was less this way because there is also serious research that is very interesting to teenagers and adults. (Academic staff)*

*It seemed that most of the people coming around were families with young children or members of the public of a very particular demographic. Although it might have just been to do with the zone that we were in, it is important that we engage with the general public of all ages and backgrounds. (Non-academic staff)*

*It is quite heavily kid-focused. I realise that this is a good way of advertising, to make it interesting to children and then the parents come along but I think more could be done to interest young adults, this seemed to be the demographic most lacking. (Postgraduate student)*

*It would be nice to understand more about the demographics of who we reach and whether there are pockets of the community that are not being reached, like teenagers. (Undergraduate student)*

Other suggestions from Activity Providers were to better integrate and improve the layout of the whole Festival; allowing them more time to see the Festival for themselves; and ensuring that optimum impact is achieved from the Festival Launch event, through better understanding of the VIPs who will be present and ensuring Activity Providers can nominate invitees.

***Volunteers***

Volunteers’ most common suggestions and areas for improvement were:

* Briefings and information for Volunteers
* Signs and signposting of events and areas

Volunteers reported that their briefing information could be improved to maximise their ability to contribute to the Festival and their feelings of satisfaction in the Volunteer role. They emphasised the importance of effective and comprehensive briefings and clear allocation and full explanation of specific roles and zones.

*I thought the briefing could have been more comprehensive. All of the events (the VIP dinner, the Alumni Weekend and the Festival) felt like separate events and were fairly disjointed. It was confusing as a volunteer to understand what the programme was and what I needed to do. I received multiple briefing documents with conflicting information. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*When setting up some of the festival areas we were not offered a great deal of guidance on what was expected, and not having been involved in the festival set up in previous years had to guess what was expected. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*At the outset of start of day/volunteer shift, Venue Managers should self-identify and have brief welcome to volunteers, hand-out the food/drink vouchers, and run-down expectations for the shift. (Postgraduate student volunteer)*

*Lots of volunteers who came to me were not entirely sure what they were supposed to be doing - I think it would be very helpful in the volunteering briefing or info pack to give summaries of each role so they are clear what they are signing up to do. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

Volunteers reported that they and visitors who asked them for information would appreciate improved internal and external signage and signposting announcements for certain areas of the Festival or key events.

*Suggest signage is made better - even once visitors were directed to the appropriate buildings with toilets the only signs were the normal blue ones. It would be good to have giant big signs. Also it wasn't clear that the Light Zone was in the Great Hall and where it was in relation to the Sherfield entrance. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*A festival programme plus map (big ones) at the entrance, info tent and around the library would be very helpful for visitors. Many came to ask me where certain activities were. (Postgraduate student Volunteer)*

*We need larger signs for Festival visitors, don't rely on normal College signs for directions to Toilets, Food outlets etc. (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

*Capacity to make Festival-wide announcements of key events, including specifying target ages could help with crowd flow by drawing people to less-busy zones and activities. (Undergraduate student Volunteer)*

*I think some sort of Festival wide announcement system would be great because when there is a special event or performance taking place, or we just need more bodies at a talk or something, it could be announced widely to remind visitors. Such a system would also be really helpful at closing time as people are reluctant to disengage sometimes! (Non-academic staff Volunteer)*

Other suggestions from Volunteers were: ensure adequate distribution of volunteers (it was reported that some areas seemed understaffed and others overstaffed); remove the time restrictions for food vouchers; and ensure all Volunteers have access to those vouchers.

# Imperial Festival 2015 on Social Media

1101 tweets were made using #impfest. The section summarises an analysis of 553 tweets made using #impfest from 9th to 12th May 2015.

94% (519) of the 553 tweets were made on the days that Imperial Festival was open.

**Timeline of #impfest tweets (n=553**

553 #impfest tweets were broadly categorised as shown in the table below. Note that some tweets were allocated to more than 1 category based on their content. Almost all tweets were positive and all negative feedback tweets (n=4) referred to the Felix newspaper not being available during Imperial Festival.

Most of the content in Positive feedback tweets described feelings of enjoyment and learning. The word ‘fun’ appeared 56 times and ‘learn’ appeared 19 times in these tweets.

**Categories of #impfest tweets**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category | Number (n=) |
| Information about /description of Festival content | 308 |
| Positive feedback about Imperial Festival | 247 |
| Anticipation or excitement ahead of Imperial Festival | 28 |
| Thank you or acknowledgement of contribution | 21 |
| Referral to external media coverage of Imperial Festival | 4 |
| Negative comments | 4 |

# Conclusions

This section reviews the impacts of Imperial Festival and its associated Schools Day against their desired outcomes and strategic objectives. It then reviews outcomes from Alumni Weekend and identifies some learning points across the whole Festival before summarising some general conclusions.

## Imperial Festival impacts

***Desired Outcomes***

**Outcome 1. The Festival is well attended and highly rated by visitors and delivery staff: the longer opening hours and more extensive programme attract an estimated 15,000+ visitors.**

This outcome was achieved. The evaluators estimate that more than 15,000 visitors attended over the two days. 94% of visitors rated Imperial Festival above average.

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

This outcome was achieved. 52% of public visitors reported that they had not visited Imperial prior to the Festival, indicating that they have no connection to Imperial College London.

**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 partly achieved. 28% of visitors heard about Imperial Festival by ‘Word of mouth’, 13% via social media and 5% via posters. Event listings, e.g. in UrbanExplorers, TimeOut and Londonist, were reported by 5% of Festival visitors.

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

This outcome was achieved for each of the following categories of outcomes:

*Knowledge & Understanding / Skills:* 90% of visitors learned something new at Imperial Festival.

*Experiences:* 94% of visitors rated Imperial Festival above average, indicating that they enjoyed it.

*Attitudes & Values:* 90% of visitors increased their understanding of research carried out at Imperial. 86% further developed their interest in science. 85% increased their general understanding of Imperial.

*Behaviour & Progression:* 99% of visitors intend to come to another Imperial Festival. 99% would recommend Imperial Festival. 98% intend to come to another similar event. 77% want to find out more about Imperial.

**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. As described above, Public and staff/student visitors rated and described their experiences of Imperial Festival and understanding of Imperial positively.

Staff and students involved in the delivery of Festival activities also rated their experiences positively. 96% rated their overall experiences above average. Most Activity Providers described that taking part had a positive impact on their opinions of Imperial. Questions about Activity Provider and Volunteer impacts could be made quantitative in future evaluations to simplify analysis and allow these impacts to be expressed as a % (as in visitor impacts above).

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

This outcome was achieved. 85% of Volunteers 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 most indicated that the Festival has had positive impacts on their opinion of Imperial. They emphasised the need for clear briefings and defined roles to optimise the volunteer experience.

**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 partly achieved to the extent that most Activity Providers, including academic staff, reported positive impacts about their understanding of Public Engagement. However only a minority of Activity Providers reported impacts on their research, mainly affording different perspectives on their work, making contacts or raising awareness among the public. Senior Managers could be interviewed or surveyed separately about Imperial Festival in future to obtain their views.

**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. 99% of Activity Providers would take part in a future Imperial Festival and 100% would recommend taking part to a colleague or peer. 98% of Festival Volunteers would take part in a future Imperial Festival and 98% would recommend taking part to a colleague or peer.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 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 described above, 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 described above, this impact was achieved. |
| 4. To increase the impact of Imperial research | This is a longer term impact. 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 communicate their work beyond academia. |
| 5. To influence the path of research carried out at Imperial | This impact can only be evaluated in the long term. |

## Impacts from Schools Day

***Desired 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 (67%) indicated that they would visit Imperial again after schools Day. It would be worth including ‘Imperial Festival Schools Day’ as an answer option in the visitor survey question about how visitors heard about the Festival to find out if Schools Day is attracting family visitors to the Festival.

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

This outcome was achieved. 95% of children indicated that they felt positively about science after Schools Day and all but one described positive feelings about what they had seen and done. Teachers reported that Schools Day had inspired or enthused their pupils about science.

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

This outcome was achieved. 96% of children reported that they learnt something and all but five described what they had learned, with the most commonly described learning being about making plastic from CO2.

**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 ‘Excited’ or ‘Good/Great’.

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

This outcome was partly achieved as just over half of teachers reported that Schools Day could potentially impact on their own teaching practice and they intend to use some of the Festival experiments in their own lessons.

**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 2 teachers. For it to be fully achieved, it requires Schools Day activities to be explicitly linked to research at Imperial.

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

This outcome was fully achieved. None of the teachers had previously visited Imperial College. All teachers rated Schools Day highly and most reported that they would like to visit Imperial Festival in 2016. Some also reported that they had learned about Imperial’s outreach offering, suggesting that they may engage with it in the future.

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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. |

## Festival learning points

The evaluation highlighted a number of learning points which are summarised below as considerations for the future:

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| Aspect of Imperial Festival | Points to consider |
| *Visitor Experience* | Continue to offer activities aimed at families but ensure that activities and programming for adults and teenagers are easily identified.  Consider theming activities according to target audience age groups, to ensure visitors do not miss activities that are best suited to their age groups.  Review site layout to optimise visitor flow and minimise empty areas or perceived wasted spaces.  Improve and increase signage for all Zones. Increased crowds mean that signs should be as large as possible  Create descriptions of activities that are accurate and accessible to all audiences (see above re. listing by target age group)  Review the layout in Research and Brain Zones to maximise their visual appeal, coherence of content and use of space.  Provide more vegetarian and vegan food options and a hot drinks outlet. |
| *Activity Provider and Volunteer Experience* | Ensure all Activity Providers and Volunteers are fully informed about refreshment options and have access to refreshments throughout the day.  Provide support and training on dealing with large crowds (e.g. how to move people on in a positive way) and diverse audiences with varying levels of background knowledge.  Support the development of activities aimed at all audiences, including older children and adults.  Brief all volunteers fully and ensure they have access all to information they need to perform their roles effectively. |
| *Evaluation* | Evaluate impacts for all associated activities i.e. Festival Launch, Alumni Weekend, Festival Fringe events.  Develop quantitative questions that explore impacts (personal, research and opinions of Imperial) for delivery participants.  Refine and further develop indicators and questions that can be used by Imperial Festival and associated events to increase understanding of how a broad range of audiences view Imperial. |

## General conclusions

We have been evaluating Imperial Festival since 2013 and we are delighted to record that it is obvious how the findings of previous evaluations have been acted upon and used to inform the Festival’s development into the significant, prestigious event that took place this year.

This year’s feedback identified a perception among visitors and delivery participants that much of the Festival is aimed primarily at children and family audiences and that adults would like more for them. Our observations suggest that many stands and activities are already suitable for all age groups. However these would benefit from clearer visibility, such as being identified in a strand of programming (with a catchy title) aimed at adults or in highlight listings for adults and teenagers in the Festival Programme (like the family-friendly highlights in this year’s Programme). In addition, there could be more targeted promotion of the Festival to adults and older teenagers and aspects of the Festival, such as direct interaction with researchers, workshops and talks, could be highlighted as opportunities for adults to participate in debate and discussion about the latest research. It should be noted that families of public staff and alumni represent a significant audience for Imperial Festival and it will be important to ensure that those with young children do not feel excluded by any developments.

Delivery participants are essential to the success of Imperial Festival and is important that their input and enjoyment is not compromised by them being unable to eat what they want when needed. Following on from feedback in previous years, changes were made to the 2015 Festival catering for staff working at the Festival and those visiting the event. These included a much expanded Farmers' Market offering, as well as the College Cafe being open for restricted amount of time for staff working at the Festival only. Although both these changes were steps in the right direction, feedback from this year suggests that the Farmers' Market stalls could be expanded, time constraints on vouchers should be removed and the Cafe should be kept open for as long as the Festival is open so that staff and volunteers can get food and drink whenever they need it. Consideration could also be given to allowing vouchers to be used at a wider range of food outlets.

During the time we have been evaluating Imperial Festival, the focus of our evaluation has developed along with the event, from focussing on experiences and processes to emphasising impacts. This shift in emphasis is wholly appropriate as Imperial Festival matures. Capturing impacts enables Imperial to determine the extent to which the Festival is meeting its stated objectives and also provides information for the College and individual staff to use as evidence of the public engagement impact of their work, e.g. in funding bids or interactions with partners and sponsors. To obtain a fuller picture of these impacts, consideration could be given to a strategic review of longer-term impacts on staff and students who have delivered activities at Imperial Festival and associated Fringe Events in the period 2012 to 2015.

We recommend that future evaluations of Imperial Festival and all its associated events (Alumni Weekend and Schools Day) include impacts, ideally using the same impact indicators developed for this year’s Festival 2015 to allow year-on-year comparisons. We suggest that it may be prudent to re-focus on evaluating processes and experiences every three or five years or when particular aspects of the Festival are substantially altered or new elements are introduced.

In summary, the evaluation of Imperial Festival 2015 provides evidence that it was a highly successful event, which met most of its desired outcomes and strategic objectives and was enjoyed by visitors, participants and volunteers alike. The new two-day format was deemed a success by visitors and those involved in delivery.

1. Based on evaluator observations of those entering and leaving the Festival via Exhibition Road and Queen’s Gate [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.imperial.ac.uk/alumni/events/alumni-weekend/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)