

# Investing in your Imperial experience

## Reflecting on an extraordinary year

### Our commitment to you

We are focused on maintaining our status as an aspirational destination for students such as you. We know many of you are proud to be part of the Imperial 'family', due to both your academically rigorous programmes and the inspiring staff and students you meet while studying with us.

You provide us with regular feedback throughout the year, and we want to react even more quickly to this so that we can deliver on your priorities. The COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet, but as we continue to emerge from the public health restrictions placed upon us, we need your support to make Imperial a university for everyone.

To succeed and get the full benefits of higher education, our priorities for your experience at the College include offering:

- an inclusive, welcoming student experience
- a seamless student experience, both in-person and digitally
- world-leading digital and physical educational spaces
- outstanding extra- and co-curricular opportunities.



### Bringing the experts together

To ensure a seamless, integrated approach to prioritising your wellbeing while at Imperial, the 'student experience' has been explicitly added to the [Vice-Provost for Education's](#) remit. Alongside this, a new role – Director of Academic Services – has been created to further integrate the full range of support services offered to you by the College.

In response to COVID-19, we have also established the Student Experience Group, which is co-chaired by the Imperial College Union Deputy President (Welfare). This student representation is vitally important and has ensured you've been well-represented at one of the most challenging periods for your own studies and for the wider College community.

We are also changing the way we consider the feedback you give us in the [Student Experience Survey](#), which we have run every year since 2012. For the first time our action plans will consider improvements across the board, rather than just in the area of the College they are focused on.



### Offering a varied curriculum

Our multi-year transformation of our curriculum continues, informed by your needs and by the latest best practice in teaching.

We introduced [I-Explore](#) this past year. It is our suite of for-degree-credit modules which are integrated into all our undergraduate students' programmes, but which sit outside their main discipline. These modules are assessed as pass/fail to ensure that students are willing to take risks and extend their knowledge into new areas.

A wide range of modules under I-Explore includes those focused on business, humanities, social sciences, languages, culture, society and global challenges. There are also opportunities to collaborate and work on projects with real-world impact. The introduction of I-Explore involved significant discussions with students, who recommended the inclusion of modules to allow the study of Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine (STEMM) areas from outside a student's chosen discipline. These also include topical areas of science being pioneered by our researchers that are not currently offered within our undergraduate programmes.

We are also offering a Multidisciplinary Project module with collaboration at its heart, where you can work as part of a multi-disciplinary team from several departments to tackle some of the biggest global challenges facing society.

Our [StudentShapers](#) programme also continues to grow in popularity, and offers students the opportunity to undertake paid projects in partnership with staff to improve curricula, develop innovative teaching, and make positive changes to your student experience.



### Welcoming accommodation



If you have lived in halls of residence at any time during your studies, you will know that our wardening teams are experienced and friendly individuals who work hard to make you feel comfortable in your new London home.

During COVID-19, what it means to be a halls resident has been transformed. Self-isolation and new restrictions on how residents can socialise with each other mean that this past year has not been easy.

In response, we were one of the first universities in the country to provide a fee waiver so that only those students that were using their halls rooms needed to pay. And for those students using their room, we have worked hard alongside our catering and accommodation teams to introduce more support than ever. For self-isolating students, this has included a food delivery and laundry service, and a support system for those staying in halls over vacation periods. The [Student Hub](#) has also provided additional services to support students looking for private accommodation, including 'find a flatmate' coffee social events.

As soon as it is feasible we hope to resume in-person social activities in our halls, and we are already making plans for how we will offer the best experience possible for our next cohort of students.



### Designing great spaces

COVID-19 has placed new expectations on our students and staff, as well as on the physical spaces on our campuses that we all remember fondly.

We were already underway with a multi-year investment in classrooms, laboratories and informal study spaces. This work has been given renewed urgency by your educational, social, and support needs during this past year. As we consider a more significant return to campus it is important we get this right.

Our immediate priorities have been to increase the amount and availability of adaptable teaching spaces; new community spaces such as common rooms; and the development of spaces that are integrated with the latest videoconferencing hardware and software.

The student community has been at the heart of all this change. Students, just like you, have been [leading projects to improve communal areas and study spaces](#), often as part of the StudentShapers programme.

Our investment has totalled £7.32m this academic year alone, with similar amounts spent in previous years. One of the standout developments to be completed this year included the [refurbishment of Levels 4/5 and 6 of the old Chemistry building](#) on the South Kensington campus. This has resulted in digital media space, as well as social and community spaces, with an eventual total capacity of 756 students.



### A supportive environment

COVID-19 continues to pose significant challenges for many students and our priority is to offer you targeted, high-quality support.

Additional staff have been employed in frontline services offered to students, administering financial support funds and reinforcing our Counselling and Mental Health Advice Service. We have expanded the range of services available via our [Student Support Zone](#) and our [Success Guide](#).

And the pandemic means that many more of our support services, including [Careers](#), [Move Imperial](#), the [Disability Advisory Service](#), [Chaplaincy](#) and [Counselling](#), have been offering online provision for the first time.

Nearer to your 'home' department, the Faculties of Engineering and Natural Sciences successfully introduced Student Wellbeing Advisors, complementing similar services provided across the College's faculties. This means you will always have someone to talk to should you need support.

Your finances are an important part of your mental and physical wellbeing, too. Worrying about this area of your life can cause additional strain during your studies. In this pandemic year we have [expanded the scale of financial support available to you](#), and we have made sure to extend the range of circumstances that allow you to apply for this vital support. This includes support for buying equipment you might need to study from home.

And if you do not feel that you need direct financial support but do feel like you want some advice, you now have access to [Blackbullion](#) – a digital financial tool designed to provide you with money skills for life.

We are also committed to providing an inclusive environment where acts of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct are not acceptable. We have rolled out the [Report and Support](#) tool as part of our actions to tackle these behaviours.



### What comes next?

The improvements mentioned here are not exhaustive but show the diversity of the changes happening at the College, from greater student representation in decision-making meetings, to significant investment in our campuses to ensure they are ready to welcome you back. We are ambitious about going further, and with strengthened relationships with the Imperial College Union and the wider student community, we plan to now move forward in deciding which temporary decisions made in response to COVID-19 should become permanent.

#### Building an inclusive community

We have committed to several actions as part of joining the Race Equality Charter. This has involved creating a cross-departmental mentoring scheme for PhD students from ethnic minorities and increasing scholarship support for all students from under-represented groups, including £10 million for new scholarships announced as part of the [President's address](#).

We are also rolling out new projects aimed at addressing a lack of diversity in the art displayed on College campuses. This will be led by the [Artworks Group](#), which was commissioned last year by the President and Provost to consider how Imperial can better reflect its staff, students and alumni through their art. This sits alongside the [History Group](#), which is working to examine the history of the College and its legacy, with a focus on colonialism and Empire.

And of course, if you follow us on social media you will have seen our [Shifting the Lens](#) campaign, which is continuing to raise the profile of ethnic minority and intersectional students and staff.

#### Strengthening our support

Our support services will continue to adapt to ensure that our provision meets your needs. We have a key focus on addressing harassment and sexual misconduct wherever it is encountered. We are also planning an expansion of our Mental Health Advice, in part to respond to existing demand but also in anticipation of a rise in demand.

#### Virtual and physical space

We are looking to the future and have a multi-year pipeline of projects ready to be delivered. This includes next-generation AV and the development of shared multi-disciplinary laboratories alongside a rolling programme of lecture theatre conversions. Student-led projects will continue to add invaluable insight, and we hope you will get involved in shaping how you want our campuses to look!

