

Response Form – Accelerated Courses and Switching University or Degree: Call for Evidence

We welcome responses to the questions below (any or all) as well as any other comments respondents may wish to make.

A copy of this call for evidence can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/accelerated-courses-and-switching-university-or-degree-call-for-evidence>

You can complete your response online at:

<https://bisgovuk.citizenspace.com/he/accelerated-courses-and-switching>

Alternatively, you can e-mail or post the completed response form to:

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The closing date for responses is 19 July 2016

Information provided in response to this call for evidence, including personal information, may be subject to publication or release to other parties or to disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes. Please see page 8 of this call for evidence for further information.

If you want information, including personal data, that you provide to be treated in confidence, please explain to us what information you would like to be treated as confidential and why you regard the information as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.

I want my response to be treated as confidential

Comments: 38T

ALL UNIVERSITY/HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Your details

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Q1: How many students changed degree course within your higher education institution over the last three academic years? *I.e. students who changed course but continued to study at your higher education institution.*

2012/13: See text below

2013/14: See text below

2014/15: See text below

We facilitate a high number of internal programme changes each year for undergraduate students to provide flexibility and maximise choice for students. This may involve switching programmes or changing academic stream within a programme. For example we allow students to change the programme from the 3 year bachelor's degree (BEng, BSc) to the 4 year integrated master's (MEng, MSci) or vice versa subject to academic achievement. Students also have the option to add an additional year, such as a year in industry, a year in research, a year in Europe or a year abroad. Changing academic stream in the 1st or 2nd year of UG study is possible between programmes where the core modules are the same and appropriate electives have been taken by the student.

Q2: How many students have transferred into your higher education institution over the last three academic years?

2012/13: 1 undergraduate student

2013/14: 4 undergraduate students

2014/15: 1 undergraduate student

Q3: Are there any common patterns as to why they have transferred into your higher education institution?

Due to the very small numbers of transfers into the institution, it is not possible to determine any common patterns or causes of this.

Q4: How many students have transferred out of your higher education institution over the last three academic years?

2012/13: 7 undergraduate students

2013/14: 1 undergraduate student

2014/15: 6 undergraduate students

Q5: Are there any common patterns as to why they have transferred out of your higher education institution?

Due to the very small numbers of transfers out of the institution, it is not possible to determine any common patterns or causes of this.

Q6: Have you got a credit transfer process in place?

Yes No

Q7: If no, why not?

Not applicable.

Q8: If yes, how are students made aware of your credit transfer process?

Credit transfer and transfer arrangements are set out in our Academic Regulations and supported by appropriate policies and procedures.

For students considering transferring into the institution this information is available publicly via the College website and we welcome applications from any HE institution in the UK or overseas. Each application is considered on an individual basis to

ensure that the student has achieved the appropriate level of qualification and covered the required programme content and skills to enable them to successfully complete the new programme.

Information and support is also available to current students who are considering transferring, whether internally to another programme or externally to another institution.

- We facilitate a high number of internal transfers to offer the greatest choice and flexibility to students as they progress through their degrees. For example, students will often switch from a BEng to MEng programme or vice versa, or decide that they wish to take a year in industry or a year abroad.
- The College operates the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ECTS). We award the appropriate number of ECTS credits where a student has completed the required learning activities and achieved the defined learning outcomes, as evidenced by appropriate assessment. If a student wishes to transfer to another institution, the College will provide a transcript detailing the credit achieved in order to support their application. Support for the student while they make this transition is available through members of staff in their [pastoral support network](#). For more information on ECTS see: http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/2015/ects-users-guide_en.pdf.

Q9: What would the impact of a credit transfer system be on the higher education sector? *If you reference other sources in your answer please state the name of the source.*

There is already a credit transfer system in place as part of the QAA Quality Code and Higher Education Framework for England and across the sector students who request to transfer are supported. We have experienced limited demand from students to transfer to another institution or to switch to a completely different academic degree discipline. We believe this is because applicants usually put a significant amount of effort into choosing their degree programme and institution when they apply, often with support from their school, families and carers. The internal flexibility that we offer further supports retention. Most requests for transfers are due to a change in circumstances of the student that occurs following enrolment. Based on this experience we would anticipate low uptake of a revised credit transfer system.

Large-scale transfer of students between institutions could only be workable for the College if the number of students transferring in were balanced by numbers transferring out. Currently, our success in supporting students who study at the College means that only small numbers do not progress within the College, and we do not consider that transfer to another institution is in the interests of more than the small number who currently transfer out. The experience may be different in disciplines that do not require expensive laboratory space and equipment, where there may be greater scope for elasticity in cohort size.

Aside from the capacity issue, large-scale transfer would have a significant impact upon the student experience. Currently, UK Higher Education Provider's place a great deal of emphasis on creating a sense of cohesion within a cohort. This is at odds with some national systems where transfer is the norm. We consider that this represents a key competitive advantage for the UK in the international market.

Increased volumes of transfer would also require a degree of curricular and pedagogical convergence. Currently, the diversity of degree programmes in terms of both content and learning styles supported is one of the strengths of the UK system. The small numbers of students transferring into Imperial currently are individually assessed in order to ensure that they will be able to experience a smooth transition to the College, and are given additional targeted support where necessary. We do not believe that this approach is scalable. For accredited degree programmes, although total course content may be more closely prescribed by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB)'s, differing styles of delivery and approaches to skills development could mean that students who transferred between institutions failed to gain the balance of knowledge and skills required for their profession.

Q10: What would the impact of a credit transfer system be on your institution? If you *reference other sources in your answer please state the name of the source.*

The College already facilitates a high number of internal transfers for undergraduates. This includes changing from a 3 year to 4 year course (or vice versa), or transferring to include a Year in Industry or studying abroad. This offers greater choice and flexibility for the student and allows them to adapt to changes in circumstances and emerging areas of interest. We do not anticipate that any changes in the current credit transfer system would alter this significantly and we would continue to accommodate demand for internal transfers. We note, however, that the current regulations around student visas are preventing our international students from enjoying the same benefits of flexibility as our Home/EU students (see Q12 for further comments on this).

As noted above, we would not anticipate greatly increased demand for transfer out of the College. Places at Imperial are highly prized, and our stringent admissions processes ensure that the overwhelming majority of students who are offered a place are able to progress within the College.

We anticipate that demand for transfer into Imperial might increase. However, we would have limited scope to meet such demand, both because cohort size in many STEMM subjects is constrained (due to the need to laboratory teaching facilities, for example); and because of the need for expensive and time-consuming tailored support to transferring students, even where they transfer from similar institutions (see answer to Question 9, above).

Q11: By what mechanisms could a system of credit transfer be more effectively embedded across the sector? *If you reference other sources in your answer please state the name of the source.*

There is already a credit transfer system as part of the QAA framework. We consider that the low levels of take-up reflect both the level of curricular diversity in the UK and the strong culture of cohort identity. We see these as strengths of the UK system, and as factors which distinguish us from some competitors (such as the US and Germany) in the international market.

Q12: What do you see as the main barriers to a more extensive credit transfer system? *If you reference other sources in your answer please state the name of the source.*

As noted above, we do not believe that current small-scale transfer process is scalable, primarily due to issues of capacity (especially in STEMM subjects) and curricular diversity.

As an international University, Imperial College is committed as far as possible to providing the same high-quality experience to its UK and non-UK students. Changes to the Tier 4 Immigration Rules in April 2016 restrict international students from changing degree programme or switching institution because they have to leave the UK to make a new visa application in their home country for permission to do this. We consider that it is inequitable that international students do not enjoy the same flexibility (even for intra-institutional transfers) as their UK counterparts.

Q13: Are there any lessons we can learn from international credit transfer models, e.g. from the US? *If you reference other sources in your answer please state the name of the source.*

As noted above, the degree of curricular diversity and the strong sense of cohort identity at UK institutions are factors which distinguish us from our international competitors. It is not necessarily in our interests to emulate those systems.

In particular, we note that bachelor's degree programmes in the US typically involve less specialisation, particularly in the early years. We would not support a lengthening of the period of undergraduate study in order to facilitate an increase in credit transfer, particularly since many of our students already study for four years in order to achieve the level of specialisation and achievement associated with an integrated master's degree.

Q14: Does your institution offer accelerated degrees?

Yes No No - but we are considering it

Q15: If yes, what are the advantages to the students and your institution of offering degree programmes designed in this way?

Not applicable

Q16: If no, what are the institutional barriers that would need to be overcome to offer more accelerated degrees?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty in covering costs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Concern about adequately covering the course requirements in a shorter time period
<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty in getting staff available to work outside term time
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Availability of facilities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Have not seen any demand from students or employers
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It would be unsuitable for most of the subjects we offer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other? Please include any other relevant information: Undergraduate students may use the time outside of contact teaching time for a number of reasons. It also offers essential time for reflection, further study and preparation for the upcoming term. The high volume of content covered during the teaching term means that this time is essential for student's academic success and individual growth. A significant proportion of students take on work experience or internships. This develops their skill set and increases their chance of employment after university. It may also be important for some students to financially support their studies. Furthermore, this is time is

	<p>essential for students wellbeing, particularly those studying STEMM subjects which typically have a high number of contact hours during the academic term. It is an opportunity for them to spend time with their family or reconnect with their home community, particularly if the institution they study at is a significant distance from their place of origin. It should be noted that members of academic staff are also responsible for teaching and/or supervising PGT and PGR students, and PGT students in particular often use the time outside the main undergraduate terms to use facilities that would otherwise be in use for undergraduate teaching. The current academic term dates are common across the world, meaning that international conferences are generally held outside the current undergraduate term times. Continuing to teach undergraduates during the summer would, therefore, considerably restrict the other activities that are undertaken within a university's academic community: teaching postgraduate students; engaging in research, including with international colleagues; and knowledge exchange activities. The continuation of these activities is essential for enriching the undergraduate student experience.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable