

IMPERIAL

SENATE

Minutes of Meeting held on 25 June 2025

- Present:** Professor Ian Walmsley (Chair); Professors Ashby, Brady, Constantinides, Craster, Haynes, Lindstedt, Mestel, Riley, Spivey, Todd; Wiesemann, Xu; Drs Bluck, Costa-Pereira, Craig, Jenkins, Tennant; Ms Hogas, Mr Lupton, Ms Bannister, Mr Ashton (Secretary), Mr Tucker (Minute Secretary),
- Apologies:** Professors Brandon, Ces, Ferguson, Green, Hanna, Mestel; Dr Rutschmann ; Ms Boutrolle, Ms Webster.
- In attendance:** Ms Anna Shierson (for minute 2944)

2939 Minutes

Received and confirmed: The minutes of the Senate meeting held on 30 April 2025 were confirmed as an accurate record (Paper Senate/2024/20).

2940 Apologies for Absence

Reported: The Chair welcomed members to the fourth and final Senate meeting of the academic year. Apologies for absence were noted as above.

2941 Chair's Action

Reported: No Chair's actions had been made since the previous meeting of the Senate.

2942 Matters Arising

Compliance with the Regulator (Minute 2933 refers)

Reported: (1) Work was ongoing to develop revised terms of reference for Departmental Teaching Committees (DTCs). These terms would inform the review of Faculty Education Committees (FECs) and QAEC. It was confirmed that discussions had taken place with the Imperial Business School and would also be held with the Faculty of Medicine, both of which do not currently operate DTCs but hold equivalent meetings.

(2) A working group had been established to consider Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) advice on compliance with Consumer Protection Law, which would contribute to the ongoing work on deadlines for new programme approvals and modifications.

(3) The Registry was developing an operational calendar to support internal deadlines for key activities.

Noted: (4) A report on the progress of these initiatives would be presented periodically to Senate.

2943 Provost's Report

Received: A verbal report from the Provost.

Senate Membership and Acknowledgements

Reported: (1) The Chair expressed appreciation to senators whose terms were coming to an end, and formally acknowledged their contributions, including:

- Camille Boutrolle, outgoing President of the ICU, who was thanked for representing the student voice on Senate; and
- Professor Alan Spivey, Associate Provost (Learning and Teaching), who was thanked, with particular recognition of leadership during the digital transition necessitated by the pandemic.

The Chair welcomed the forthcoming appointments of Nico Henry as new President of the ICU, Emina Hogas as continuing Deputy President (Education) of the ICU, and Professor Sophie Rutschmann, who would assume the role of Associate Provost (Learning and Teaching) in the summer.

Office for Students Consultation

(2) It was reported that the Office for Students (OfS) had indicated that it would be releasing a consultation on proposals for revised arrangements for a future quality system. The OfS had already been engaging with the sector and with student groups following the recommendation in the Public Bodies Review that assessment activities be integrated into a more coherent system to support continuous improvement. The forthcoming consultation was expected to include proposals for a modified Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which would integrate B3 assessments, phase in the inclusion of postgraduate taught programmes, and incorporate partnership arrangements. It was noted that the revised approach might provide a dashboard of ratings rather than a single overall rating, and operate on a rolling basis rather than periodically, with assessments undertaken through desk-based review of data, provider submissions, and student input. Further consideration was being given to the design of a system that would be proportionate across all providers, as well as the transition from current arrangements. It was emphasised that the university's priority should be to ensure that its quality mechanisms remained appropriate to the institution, whilst ensuring alignment to regulatory requirements.

Freedom of Speech

(3) It was reported that the university had approved a Freedom of Speech Complaints Procedure, which had been published on the university's website. The procedure applied to all staff, students, and visitors who considered that the university had breached its free speech duties in respect of them, and complaints were to be directed to the University Secretary's Office.

(4) An update was also provided on the implementation of the OfS' freedom of speech policies, taken forward in the context of the recent Supreme Court ruling. It was noted that the introduction of the complaints procedure formed part of the university's work to ensure compliance with OfS conditions. The procedure established a formal mechanism through which concerns relating to freedom of speech could be examined and, where appropriate, remedied.

2944 Attrition Rates by Year of Study

Received: A Paper from the Director of Planning and Insight (Paper Senate/2024/21).

Reported: (1) An analysis of attrition rates by year of study, year of entry, and fee status was presented, covering students entering between 2016/17 and 2020/21. Overall, attrition rates were generally low and had remained relatively stable across the period analysed, taking into account small numbers. The analysis highlighted an increase in students taking breaks in their studies, particularly among home students, and ongoing work was being conducted to understand the reasons behind these trends.

(2) Differences were observed between home and overseas students. Attrition rates for overseas students leaving after their first year were similar to those leaving after their second year, whereas home students tended to leave at higher rates after their first year. The data also suggested that overseas students were more likely to take a break from their studies during or immediately after 2020/21, the first full year of remote learning, particularly for those entering in 2018/19, 2019/20, and 2020/21.

Considered in discussion: (3) Senate discussed the relationship between attrition and completion rates, emphasising the importance of understanding why students leave. The data presented focused on whether students had left at any point during their studies and the impact of interruptions of study on completion outcomes. Departmental differences in attrition rates were also noted, with some departments experiencing more students transferring from four-year to three-year degree programmes. It was observed that students who moved from four-year to three-year programmes tended to have less favourable outcomes.

(4) The impact of an increasing number of mitigating circumstances claims and interruptions of study on attrition rates was discussed. It was suggested that addressing the underlying causes of mitigating circumstances and interruptions could help reduce attrition as these support mechanisms are used by students to accommodate a wide range of circumstances. Support for students requiring time off to recover was emphasised as important, alongside recognition of financial pressures and the additional adjustment challenges faced by students who had completed A-levels during the pandemic.

2945 Update on Student Lifecycle Board

Received: A presentation from the Academic Registrar.

Student Life Cycle Board (SLB) Objectives and Projects

Reported: (1) The objectives of the Student Life Cycle Board (SLB) were presented, focusing on enhancing the student journey, simplifying administrative processes, providing staff with the necessary tools, supporting decision-making, and ensuring compliance. The importance of collaboration across the university and the allocation of appropriate resources to achieve these objectives was emphasised.

(2) Several ongoing and upcoming projects under the SLB were outlined. These included improving inquiry management, decommissioning unsupported systems, supporting the Pears Cumbria School of Medicine, addressing issues with marks processing, enhancing student wellbeing services, and developing a module catalogue.

Considered in discussion: (3) It was noted that the development of a module catalogue formed part of the broader work on curriculum and module selection, and that there had already been initial discussions about progressing this quickly. Senate members fully endorsed the development of a catalogue. In discussion, it was highlighted that there were issues relating to data quality and the confirmation process to ensure that the catalogue content was accurate. Feedback from faculties had made clear that a catalogue was

required, particularly to support cross-departmental module enrolment. The challenges of integrating data from different systems were noted, including Banner, Celcat, and other reporting tools. It was explained that while the Unified Data Platform had originally been intended to resolve these issues, it had raised additional challenges.

(4) The use of AI to support university processes was also discussed. It was suggested that AI could be deployed to manage complex administrative processes, such as mitigating circumstances, by reducing manual involvement while still ensuring that students received appropriate support. AI was already being used within customer relationship management and inquiry management tools, although its potential application to teaching delivery was recognised as a separate area of work.

2946 Student Complaints Procedure

Received: A Paper from the Academic Registrar (Paper Senate/2024/22).

Reported: (1) The revised student complaints procedure had been considered by QAEC at its last meeting but was presented to Senate for approval before consideration by Council as it was an appendix to the Regulations of Imperial College of Science, Technology And Medicine (Section 19), which falls under the university's charter, statutes, ordinances and regulations. Senate was also reminded that it was a condition of registration with the OfS that the university had a student complaints procedure.

(2) The changes presented related primarily to the final stages of the procedure, which allowed students to request a review of the stage two (formal) outcome on limited grounds. The proposal was for this to be amended so that it could be undertaken by one member of staff rather than by a panel. The member of staff must have had no prior involvement in the complaint and would be asked to consider eligible requests after an initial assessment of the request for review by the Student Casework Team. Holding a panel was not a requirement of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) good practice framework, and the change would help to free up the pool of panel members to consider cases at the earlier stages. Currently, an average of approximately 10% of formal complaints had seen a request for review. Other changes included adding some clarity around timescales for submission of formal complaints and a new section on the OIA and Completion of Procedures (COP) letters.

Recommended: (3) Subject to some minor revisions, the Senate recommended the Student Complaints Procedure to the Council, with effect from 1 October 2025.

2947 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee

Received: A report from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee held on 4 June 2025 presented by the Academic Registrar (Paper Senate/2024/23). The report contained one item for approval: the proposed updates to the student terms and conditions for 2025–26.

Reported: (1) The full student Terms and Conditions 2025–26 document was included as Appendix A to the QAEC report, with an overview of the proposed amendments and their impact presented in tabular form. The Terms had been reviewed by relevant university legal

and regulatory teams to ensure alignment with Competition and Markets Authority advice on compliance with Consumer Protection Law.

Approved: (2) The Senate approved the student Terms and Conditions 2025–26, subject to some minor amendments.

Noted: (3) The following items were contained within the QAEC report:

- Updates to the Procedure for the Assessment of Fitness to Practise Medicine (to reflect current guidance from the General Medical Council and to prepare for the opening of the Pears Cumbria School of Medicine at the start of the next academic year)
- Updates to the Doctoral Academic Communication Requirement (DACR) (to allow all doctoral students to benefit from required academic communication diagnostic training, as set out in the item 'Regulations for MPhil/PhD 2025-26')
- Mitigating Circumstances Focus Group report
- Updates on the review of the Short Course Approval Process
- Undergraduate annual monitoring
- Minutes of the Regulation and Policy Review Committee (RPRC) and the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC)
- Updates to the Policy on Research Degree (PhD, MPhil, MD[Res] and EngD) Supervision.

2948 Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study 2025-26

Received: A Paper from the Academic Registrar setting out proposed updates to the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study 2025-26 (Paper Senate/2024/24).

Reported: (1) The proposed updates had previously been considered by RPRC and QAEC. The main changes primarily provided additional clarity to existing regulations. The full revised regulations would be published on the academic regulations webpage in August.

Approved: (2) The Senate approved the updates to the Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study 2025-26.

2949 Regulations for MPhil/PhD 2025-26

Received: A Paper from the Academic Registrar setting out proposed updates to the Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD 2025-26 (Paper Senate/2024/24).

Reported: (1) The proposed updates had previously been considered by RPRC and QAEC. The main changes provided clarity on admissions, the purpose of the Early Stage Assessment and the Late Stage Review, requirements of the Progress Review, and implementation of a revised Doctoral Academic Communication Requirement (DACR).

Reported: (2) The revised DACR managed by the Centre for Academic English (CfAE) would allow all doctoral students (no exemptions) to benefit from mandatory academic communication diagnostic training. The diagnostic training would replace both the compulsory initial assessment (DACR A1) and the compulsory progress assessment at ESA (DACR A2).

Approved: (3) The Senate approved the updates to the Regulations for the Awards of MPhil and PhD 2025-26, with effect from 1 September 2025.

2950 Any other business

Reported: Senate members expressed their appreciation to the Chair of Senate, who was leaving the university, for the leadership provided over the past seven years. Senate recorded thanks for the Chair's commitment and stewardship during the pandemic, noting how university values had been exemplified and how Senate had been guided through challenging times. The Chair responded by expressing appreciation for the kind words offered, emphasising that it had been a privilege to serve in the role, and acknowledged the support of Senate, and colleagues across the university, in navigating the challenges of recent years.

2951 Dates of Next Meetings

Reported: That the following meeting of the Senate would take place in 2025/26:

- Wednesday 15 October 2025 (15:00-17:00)
- Wednesday 10 December 2025 (15:00-17:00)
- Wednesday 25 February 2026 (15:00-17:00)
- Wednesday 22 April 2026 (15:00-17:00)
- Wednesday 24 June 2026 (15:00-17:00)