Imperial Festival 2018 – proposals process guidance

Over the past six years the Imperial Festival has grown from 5,000 visitors to around 20 000 visitors. Together, we can ensure this flagship public event continues to develop and improve as well as grow.

We are committed to a Festival that ensures our visitors have a wonderful experience and leave with powerful Imperial memories. The Festival contributes to the College’s mission around Societal Engagement. It gives thousands of staff and students a platform to develop skills in public engagement, and experience a range of new perspectives on their work. You can read the full set of objectives behind Imperial Festival at the end of this document.

The heightened interest in the Festival in recent years, both in attendees and participating staff, has made selecting the content an increasingly important issue. We need to ensure our visitors can locate and access content that is most relevant and interesting to them. As a result, it is more important than ever that teams read through this guidance document, to understand what we are prioritising, before starting your proposal. We may not be able to guarantee a place for every Imperial researcher, staff member of student who expresses an interest in taking part.

**Type of visitor experiences:**

The Festival proposals form identifies seven different types of experiences that we could offer visitors in 2018.

1. **Exhibit** – This is a permanent activity that occupies a space within a Festival zone throughout the weekend. Usually, these are staffed by the teams behind them who create and bring visual and/or interactive components that will help to tell the story of their research. This could be a demonstration related to a specific area of research or something creative or attention-grabbing aimed at drawing people in to find out more. Having members of the teams behind the exhibits present over the weekend means that the public can ask questions and meet the people carrying out the research - our evaluation shows this is something our visitors particularly value.

2. **Installation** – Similar to an exhibit, an installation is a permanent feature of the Festival but doesn’t need to be manned/staffed. As a result it might require some extra descriptive materials to explain the piece in the absence of its creators. Installations might include immersive sculptures, art or photography displays linked to Imperial research.

3. **Discussions** – The Festival delivers a popular talks programme and is hosted in some of the College’s largest lecture theatres. They give a predominantly adult audience a chance to hear about a particular subject in a bit more depth. Talks are generally 20-30 minutes in length with additional time for discussion and questions. They must be developed and delivered in a style that will be interesting and engaging for non-experts with a publically appealing title. The best talks answer a particular pertinent, intriguing or highly topical question, or explain a well-known or current phenomenon through the latest research in the field. Our hope for 2018 is
many researchers already proposing other types of experiences might also put forward ideas for a talk they could give during their Festival weekend.

4. **Workshops** – Ideally these would run throughout the Festival (or at least several times on one day) and give members of the public a chance to get involved in making, creating or contributing to something with guidance from you and your team. These could be ‘drop in’ activities which run continuously throughout the day or we could book participants into scheduled sessions. The workshops should be designed with one of these two approaches in mind. Workshops work best when your team is present to have conversations about the research linked to the workshop. We can likely cover workshop material costs and we can also put you in contact with family learning professional to help develop and deliver the activity with you.

5. **Tour** – Our visitors really enjoy behind-the-scenes tours of our facilities and/or laboratories. Tours are organised by the central Festival Team and tailored to the needs of your particular facility or lab. We will be responsible for registrations and bringing groups of people over at agreed times, so all you will need to do is prepare short demos and presentation that can be delivered within the facility and repeated easily throughout the day/weekend.

6. **Music and dance performances** – The Festival has separate dance and music tents, each with their own PA systems, which are open to proposals from both professional and amateur performers. We are keen for ideas that include audience interaction, and/or where music or dance can be used to illustrate areas of Imperial research.

7. **Roaming performances** – These can be very diverse performances (music, dance, costume interpretation etc) that don’t require permanent PA systems. They could include roaming research demonstrations that can take place outside on Imperial College Road, in Dalby Court or possibly on Exhibition Road.

**What we are looking for in 2018**

Each year we evaluate the Festival and collect feedback from exhibitors, visitors and volunteers to find out what they most valued. Based on this, and the Festival Objectives we have the following suggestions for 2018. Whilst we are not expecting each proposal to include all of the elements below, we recommend considering how you might incorporate each of these into your proposal.

**Age specific content**
Feedback we often receive from Festival attendees, particularly from families with young children, is a difficulty in finding activities that were particularly aimed at them. As a result, for 2018 we are asking for proposals to specify which audience groups their activity would be most suitable for, so we can help our visitors to access this.

- ☐ Families with young children (0-5)
- ☐ Families with young children (6-12)
Participatory engagement
The Festival aims to create a platform for two-way connections around Imperial’s work. As a result we welcome proposals that include creative ways to illicit, record and display public ideas or views on issues related to a research topic, or make use of the Festival in terms of collecting data and actively involving the public in the research.

Collaborations
The Festival is well-placed to support Imperial’s collaborative philosophy around research and can also host our partners. This could include community partners, creative collaborators (artists, film makers, designers...etc) or research collaborators. If you are interested in partnering with a group outside of Imperial but don’t know where to start, contact us and we may be able to provide some advice and a small amount of money for partnership work.

Installations
We are very keen to reduce the number of poster boards this year, as our visitors engage with them very little and enjoy more interactive engagement. Rather than every exhibit having a table and poster board we would like to encourage other uses of space within our various zones and marquees – and the more eye-catching the better. This could be pre-existing models or equipment from your own labs (or from those of your collaborators), or something that is made by your group or an artist working with you over the months leading up the Festival. If your ideas require materials, the movement of equipment or couriering of pieces of kit from around the country, that is something that we could help with.

Use of social media
Social media can be an effective way to reach wider groups of people with your research. It works well at the Festival when visitors can capture video or image-based mementos of their experiences - whether it’s a record of their performance in a competition or a picture of something they created on your exhibit.

If you would like to discuss the development of your ideas, please contact James Romero, Public Engagement Programme Coordinator, on j.romero@imperial.ac.uk or 020 7594 8198.

Objectives behind Imperial Festival
As one of Imperial’s Flagship Societal Engagement initiatives, the Imperial Festival is designed to meet all of Imperial’s Societal Engagement Goals, which are as follows:

1. Towards confident communities
   To provide inspirational and accessible experiences to diversify and increase the range of people who feel confident about participating in Science, Technology Engineering and Business (SEMB) decisions and activities that affect their daily lives.

2. Gaining new perspectives
To enhance our work, through facilitating connections and interactions that enable our people to listen and respond to a diverse range of non-academic perspectives on our research and teaching.

3. **Tackling shared challenges**
   Working together with our public communities to tackle our shared challenges, because together we can solve issues affecting us, locally and globally.

4. **Creating culture change**
   To enable our staff and students to deliver mutually-rewarding engagement experiences for society, and to evaluate our impact thereby creating a culture of societal engagement at Imperial.

5. **Profile-raising.**
   To enhance Imperial’s profile and reputation among wider society, most especially the public, to expand our network of collaborators in research, societal engagement and teaching.

We look forward to working with you on the 2018 Imperial Festival.

Imperial Festival Team