

Appendix B FoM - ICSMSU three-tier structure

Summary

This draft proposal outlines options for creating postgraduate representation alongside ICSMSU in response to Imperial College Union's Democracy Review. Based on consultation with current representatives and students, it proposes a three-tier structure featuring course representatives, department representatives feeding up to faculty-level leadership, and three faculty-level leadership roles (PG President, VP PGT, VP PGR). This addresses identified gaps in middle-tier communication and the distinct needs of undergraduate, postgraduate taught, and postgraduate research students.

The Core Challenge: ICSMSU currently represents MBBS and BMB undergraduate students (the School of Medicine). Postgraduate students in the Faculty of Medicine (taught masters and research degrees) require representation structures. Consultation revealed critical structural gaps: course representatives do not know who to escalate issues to, there is no clear organogram showing how communication works, and different student cohorts (UG, PGT, PGR) have fundamentally different representation needs.

Proposed Solution: Develop a three-tier representation structure with: (1) course representatives continuing to provide local engagement, (2) six department representatives feeding feedback up to leadership, and (3) dedicated Postgraduate President, VP PGT, and VP PGR providing faculty-level leadership through a Faculty of Medicine PG Committee. This model creates clear escalation pathways and appropriate structures for postgraduate representation.

Why This Matters:

- Democracy Review requires PG representation to be embedded within CUs
- Course representatives don't know who to escalate issues to - middle-tier gap
- PGR election turnout is only 9.1% compared to 54.7% for undergraduates
- PGT and PGR students have fundamentally different needs requiring separate representation

1. Background and Context

1.1 Democracy Review Requirements

The Democracy Review includes specific recommendations for constituent unions:

Recommendation 5.3: *Each CU will have an elected postgraduate officer/VP PG on their committee to deliver PG-specific activity, replacing the current AWO structure.*

Flexibility for ICSMSU: The review explicitly states: "Particular consultation on this issue has been extended to the Faculty of Medicine (including staff), given the current remit of the ICSMSU and how it is funded. There is recognition that there may need to be some flexibility, and ICU will work with ICSMSU and its faculty to ensure it reaches a mutually beneficial solution."

Note: The Faculty of Medicine and School of Medicine have an explicit split in terms of university-side operations and management. Staff see only MBBS and BMB

undergraduates as part of the School of Medicine (ICSM), while PG students are part of the broader Faculty of Medicine.

1.2 Key Findings from Student Consultation

Consultation with current ICSMSU representatives, Academic Wellbeing Officers, and student representatives revealed critical structural gaps:

Middle-Tier Engagement Gap:

- Course representatives do not know Academic Wellbeing Officers exist or where to escalate issues
- Department representation should exist consistently but largely doesn't - this middle tier needs strengthening
- No organisational structure showing how communication works

Distinct Student Cohort Needs:

- PGR concerns quite different from UGs/PGTs - more separation would be useful
- Suggestion for separate structures with communication between three levels of students (UG, PGT, PGR)

Local vs. Faculty-Level Activity:

- Department SSLGs are good at dealing with local issues
- Interest in faculty-level coordination before ICU-level discussions to strengthen Faculty of Medicine voice

2. Proposed Three-Tier Representation Structure

Based on student consultation, this proposal recommends a three-tier model:

2.1 Tier 1: Course Representatives (Not on Committee)

Structure:

- Continue and strengthen course representative structure (typically 2-3 per cohort)
- Regular surveys within courses as modules progress, sharing feedback with department heads
- Department SSLGs remain main forum for academic representation discussions
- Course reps feed issues and feedback to their Department Representative

Support Provided:

- Improved role descriptions with clear responsibilities
- Induction training on role and interactions with staff and other students, ensuring that every course representative engages
- Clear escalation pathway to Department Representative

2.2 Tier 2: Faculty of Medicine Postgraduate Committee

The committee operates as a parallel structure to ICSMSU, bringing together faculty-level leadership and department representatives:

Leadership Roles:

Postgraduate President:

- Chairs the Faculty of Medicine PG Committee
- Represents all Faculty of Medicine postgraduate students
- Overall postgraduate strategy and advocacy
- Coordinates with ICSMSU President on faculty-wide matters
- Community building across taught and research students

Vice President Postgraduate Taught:

- Represents all taught master's students (MSc, MRes)
- Coordinates PGT department representatives
- Focuses on programme quality, assessment, module satisfaction
- Addresses taught student welfare and career support (including PG-specific careers fairs)
- Sits on relevant Faculty Staff-Student Committees

Vice President Postgraduate Research:

- Represents all research degree students (PhD)
- Coordinates PGR department representatives
- Focuses on supervision quality, research environment, progression
- Addresses research student concerns: isolation, long-term project management
- Partners with Early Career Research Institute (ECRI)
- Sits on relevant Faculty Staff-Student Committees and research committees

Six formalised Department Representatives (Feeding up to Leadership):

Whilst these representatives exist in some areas, there is a need to ensure that the roles are clearer and are filled consistently, to address the critical middle-tier gap, bridging course representatives and faculty-level leadership:

- Department Rep: Infectious Disease
- Department Rep: Metabolism, Digestion and Reproduction
- Department Rep: Surgery and Cancer
- Department Rep: NHLI (National Heart and Lung Institute)
- Department Rep: Public Health
- Department Rep: PEARS (remote site - taught only)

Department Representative Responsibilities:

- Gather feedback from course representatives within their department
- Feed feedback and issues up to VP PGT/VP PGR (creating visible middle-tier presence)
- Represent department-specific issues at Faculty level
- Sit on department Staff-Student Liaison Groups (SSLGs)
- Support local department-level activities where most engagement happens

Clear Organogram:

Course Representatives > Department Representatives > VP PGT/VP PGR > PG President > ICU level

2.3 Tier 3: ICU-Level Integration

Faculty-Level Pre-Meetings:

- PG representatives will attend ICU-level collective meetings, and have pre-meetings as a group beforehand to collate key PG Faculty of Medicine issues and stances
- PG Faculty of Medicine representatives (PG President, VP PGT, VP PGR) coordinate Faculty of Medicine position before ICU engagement
- Strengthens Faculty of Medicine voice at institution level

Cross-Cohort Coordination:

- Termly meetings between ICSMSU President, UG representatives, and FoM PG Committee leadership
- BMB and PG dialogue opportunities for students considering future postgraduate study
- Regular check-ins to compare social and society experience, share structure and inspiration

3. Implementation and Next Steps

3.1 Success Metrics

- Course representative awareness of escalation pathways (target: 80% can identify their Department Rep)
- Department rep visibility (target: 70% of PG students know their department rep exists)
- Improved PGR election turnout (target: 15% from current 9.1%)
- Student satisfaction with representation structures in PTES/PRES surveys

3.2 Next Steps

Union Council Approval:

- Present proposal to Union Council for approval in principle (paper deadline 6th March)
- Develop clear organogram and role descriptions following Union Council approval
- Positions to be elected during the ICU Autumn Elections

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Changes to be communicated to Faculty of Medicine, ICSM and FoM Department key staff, with their role in communication and success of changes clearly outlined
- ICSMSU President and current AWOs to collaborate with ICU Representation Manager on developing structure and resources

4. Recommendation

Union Council is asked to:

- Approve the three-tier representation structure addressing identified consultation gaps. (UR5)
- Endorse formalising six department representative positions feeding up to faculty leadership. (UR6)
- Approve separate PG President, VP PGT and VP PGR roles for Faculty of Medicine addressing distinct cohort needs. (UR7)
- Endorse the facilitation of faculty-level pre-meeting structure and termly UG-PG coordination meetings as part of the role description of FoM PG President role. (UR8)