

IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICINE

Minutes of Council Meeting

Held at The Stadium, Scale Space on 11 July 2025, at 09.00

Present

Mr. V. Banga (Chair), Ms. A. Ashley-Smith, Professor Sir L. Borysiewicz, Ms. C. Boutrolle, Professor H. Brady (President), Professor N. Brandon, Ms. K. Briggs, Ms. K. Coates, Mr. C. Cooper, Professor R. Craster, Dr L. Elvidge, Professor Dame L. Gladden, Mr. A. Hennah, Sir R. Kalifa (until Minute 14) (online), Mr. R. Kerse, Mr. D. Khanna, Professor L. Lightstone (online), Mr. J. Ritblat, Dr M. Safa, Mr. S. Saxena, Ms. A. Spring (until Minute 16) (online), Professor P. Todd, Professor I. Walmsley (Provost) and Mr. R. Martin (Registrar and University Secretary).

In attendance

Mr. N. Henry (ICU President-Elect), Ms. A. MacIntosh-LaRocque (Incoming Student Member of Council), Chief People Officer (Minutes 4-7), Deputy Director of Talent and Culture (Minutes 4-7), Chief Information Officer (Minutes 8-11), Director of Research Computing Services (Minutes 8-11), Chief Financial Officer (Minutes 12 - 16), Vice-President (Advancement) (Minute 28-30), Director of Institutional Compliance and Risk Management (Minutes 31-32) and Director of University Governance.

Welcome

1. The Chair welcomed Professor Dame L. Gladden to her first meeting and introduced Mr. N. Henry, the President-Elect of the ICU, and Ms. A. MacIntosh-LaRocque, the incoming Student Member of Council. Apologies for absence were received from Professor D. Ashby, Dr M. Meaney Haynes, and Mr. T. Olanrewaju.

Minutes and matters arising

2. The Minutes and notes from the meeting held on 9 May 2025 were approved and the action tracker noted.

Conflicts of interest with agenda items

3. No conflicts of interest were raised.

Strategy Deep Dive: Imperial Talent

4. The President introduced the Chief People Officer and the Deputy Director of Talent and Culture, who presented the Deep Dive (Paper 4). They explained that the ongoing transformation of the People function from a traditional HR model to a more strategic role was central to supporting Imperial's mission to deliver *Science for Humanity*. This shift aimed to build a future-ready, agile, and motivated workforce with the leadership capabilities to navigate challenges and opportunities. They emphasised the importance of aligning people strategies with organisational goals, placing employee experience, talent development, and an inclusive culture at the heart of sustained innovation and impact.
5. The Talent Strategy was presented as a key enabler of Imperial's wider transformation, research excellence, and societal contribution. Its objectives, along with the associated changes and initiatives, were developed in response to the complex and evolving environment in which the University operated - shaped by global competition, a shifting higher education landscape, hybrid working, and rising employee expectations for meaningful development and work-life balance. With a workforce of over 9,000, there were diverse needs and increasing demand for tailored development opportunities.
6. Key points in discussion were that:
 - a. Performance management tended to absorb more attention than talent development, and there was opportunity to reinvest in structured, long-term development, not only for aspiring leaders but for staff at all levels who were critical to the institution's success.
 - b. Apprenticeships were a great way to attract talent, particularly for research technical roles. It would be important not to underestimate how many of these roles would need to be created as the innovation cluster grew, noting that sometimes these professionals commanded higher salaries to work there than in university departments, risking the loss of the brightest individuals.
 - c. The importance of maintaining organisational agility while embedding more consistent frameworks was highlighted, particularly in light of capacity constraints. It was noted that agility had been key to Imperial's success, and care would be needed to avoid overly bureaucratic processes that could limit responsiveness to individual needs.
 - d. It was highlighted that those most in need of development often did not engage with existing offers. To address this, a more inclusive and accessible

development model was being pursued, incorporating shorter, flexible learning options such as micro-sessions, as well as secondments and longer-term programmes.

- e. It was important to ensure leaders had the skills to identify and promote talent while managing expectations, particularly because talent development and progression did not always align with promotion opportunities.
- f. The strategy formed part of a broader commitment to cultural change, aiming to address areas requiring further focus, including closing the gender pay gap and enhancing the student experience.
- g. The importance of balancing strategic objectives with the effective use of existing skills, resources, and technologies was highlighted. The strategy included plans to align learning with institutional priorities, including executive development in AI and other future-focused areas, positioning Imperial to lead in this space.
- h. Engagement surveys and other feedback tools were recognised as valuable for measuring progress but needed to be carefully designed and used sparingly to capture meaningful insights without causing survey fatigue. A focused set of key performance metrics, prioritising a few meaningful indicators rather than many, was emphasised to monitor progress and indicate long-term success over the next five years.

7. In closing, the President noted positive cultural shifts across the institution. The academic promotion process was highlighted as a particular strength, especially for its encouragement of behaviours beyond academic outputs. Early feedback from PhD students, postdocs, and early career researchers about the Early Career Researcher Institute was positive, particularly regarding enhanced development pathways. Immediate challenges for the Executive to consider included better support for atypical career paths, particularly for researchers leading complex programmes, and technicians working in areas of advanced research, who were critical to Imperial's success.

Deep Dive: Digital

- 8. The Chief Information Officer and Director of Research Computing Services were welcomed to the meeting to provide an update on progress against the Digital Plan, now 18 months into implementation. The Chief Information Officer noted that the plan remained a living document, evolving alongside Imperial's ambitions. She highlighted recent and upcoming deliverables, including the launch of the customer relationship

management system for student applicants (Imperial 360). Improvements to the digital student experience included the students' unified admin view, expected by 2025–26, followed by more personalised, AI-supported tools, such as guided module selection, by 2027–28. For researchers, the HEX platform was scheduled for release in the autumn to support AI-enabled research and data asset management, with Cyber Essentials accreditation for core services expected by the end of the summer. Infrastructure developments included the rollout of the Imperial Glass platform, focused on enhancing the employee experience, which would be piloted with the ICT division, alongside the rollout of digital access cards to replace the current plastic ID cards.

9. A recent cybersecurity assessment, conducted by Imperial's cyber security insurance broker and released within the past week, reaffirmed Imperial's established strengths in identity and authentication, while also confirming the opportunities for enhancement in training and awareness.
10. ICT spend was transitioning to a more flexible, operational model, with the Digital Plan driving increased investment to address legacy infrastructure. While annual spend was forecast to slightly exceed sector benchmarks, activity was prioritised within budget constraints. Some deliverables were delayed, and it was acknowledged that overall delivery might take a year longer than originally planned due to funding limitations. However, it was confirmed that contingency had been built into cyber planning, and this area would not be delayed.
11. Other points raised in discussion were that:
 - a. Change management was recognised as a key challenge, particularly in implementing enterprise solutions and reducing departmental fragmentation, though recent successes were noted. The cyber “purple team” exercise was an important initiative, highlighting organisational readiness as a critical factor in strengthening cyber resilience. A technology advisory subcommittee was suggested to help maintain momentum, provide access to current expertise and best practice, and support benchmarking against “best in class” standards.
 - b. The initiatives to enhance the student experience, particularly by enabling earlier interventions through counselling and academic services, received strong support. A new health and wellbeing platform, shaped by student community feedback, was being integrated into the MyImperial portal.
 - c. Engaging academics remained a priority to prevent digital divides and ensure participation in governance. Most academics supported these initiatives, with previous tensions giving way to constructive cooperation and ongoing efforts to

- rebuild trust, embed joint governance, and strengthen cyber resilience.
- d. The Helix platform enabled Imperial researchers to collaborate across institutional and national boundaries, helping to dismantle traditional silos between local and national systems. AI was already driving real-time decision-making within national infrastructure, such as major data centres, and it would be important to engage individual researchers to ensure they understood and adapted to these evolving capabilities.
- e. Data governance was highlighted as a priority, particularly the need to know where data resided and to sequence efforts effectively to build organisational trust and security. Despite Helix's strengths, challenges remained in educating users on effective data management, including decisions around where and how to store and analyse data.
- f. There was clear internal accountability, with strong collaboration from Faculty Deans and other leaders to support delivery. Externally, Imperial's leadership was recognised through frequent requests for advice from other universities, demonstrating confidence in its direction despite ongoing areas for improvement.

Capital Plan and Funding Update

- 12. The Chair of Council introduced the item, noting that there had been clear alignment in the Capital Plan priorities, particularly the Academic Building. The approach reflected thoughtful management of Imperial's financial model and the need for facilities to support its reputation and strategic aims. The Chairs of the Finance and Property Committees confirmed their support for the approach, which responded to the Chair's question on where additional income from recent student growth had gone - primarily to overheads, subsidising UK undergraduates, and supporting research. The financial position remained close to break even, with no confirmed funding route yet for the Academic Building. This set a clear agenda and underscored the need for innovative solutions to remain competitive.
- 13. The Chief Operating Officer presented his update (Paper 6), which summarised the current position on strategic capital investments, focusing particularly on the Academic Building and the broader estate strategy. He emphasised the necessity of investment to support growth in strategically key areas such as AI, mathematics, and interdisciplinary research, noting that over half of Imperial's academic activity was expected to be based around White City and Hammersmith in the coming years. The update also addressed

near-term investment pressures, including teaching labs and health and safety requirements, the need to raise capital on a phased basis, with a shift in emphasis from borrowing to asset sales and philanthropy, and the importance of maintaining liquidity while safeguarding the academic mission. Additionally, plans to vacate parts of South Kensington to support academic growth and progress towards carbon net zero targets were highlighted.

14. In discussion the following points were noted:

- a. That it was important to support Imperial's academic growth in emerging sectors such as quantum computing and hybrid quantum-classical technologies, and to prioritise partnerships that build on existing strengths, including the development of an AI cluster. Efforts were underway to leverage national facilities and enhance visibility through competitive bids, with progress made in developing industrial partnerships.
- b. The endowment's history, purpose, and governance were acknowledged, with a need for reassessment in the current context. The first Campaign Development Board meeting highlighted the potential, with key campaign elements being finalised and further integration to be discussed at the autumn board meeting, followed by an update to Council.
- c. The student perspective was noted, with support for carbon net zero and an emphasis on its significance to students. Scenario planning and the integration of sustainability goals into the University's broader strategies were identified as key considerations.
- d. There was recognition of the increased clarity around the ambition, strategy, and financial plans, alongside concerns about financial flexibility and the need to build sufficient fundraising headroom to address potential challenges. The programme's clear pathway, ongoing need for creative partnerships, the executive team's responsiveness, and progress in philanthropy development were all acknowledged.

Budget Approval for 2025/26

15. The Chief Financial Officer presented the proposed capital and operating budgets for 2025/25 (Paper 7), which had been discussed and recommended to Council by the Finance Committee. He noted that:

- a. Compared to the latest forecasts, the proposed operating budget for 2025/26 showed income growth of 2.7% and expenditure growth of 4.7%. Research income was higher in part due to the closeout of several projects, which provided

a temporary boost. Additional income that year came from equity spending, the early release of £16 million from One Portal Way, and endowment funds.

However, funding for research support was expected to decrease by £17 million the following year as some grants were not expected to be renewed.

- b. Staff costs increased in line with income, including salary increments, additional National Insurance contributions, equity and achievement awards, and pension investments, resulting in an overall rise of about 4.5%, reflecting inflation.

Targeted investments in academic staff were made ahead of anticipated student growth, with specific budget increases related to the Great Service Programme, including the rollout of the new ERP system.

- c. Cost increases remained controlled and managed, with the University Management Board scrutinising many items and achieving reductions in several areas. Despite this, capital expenditure ambition stayed high, consistent with last year's plans and forecasts. An additional £50 million was taken out related to the Victoria Industrial Estate (VIE) acquisition, as discussed at the time of purchase last year.
- d. The delivery of the Faculty of Medicine estate strategy had accelerated, bringing some costs forward. Progress continued on the Academic Building project, with spending rising from £14 million at the end of stage 3 last summer to £18.2 million currently. Major strategic projects totaling £60 million were planned, with further scenario analysis expected in November to refine these figures.

16. The main points raised in discussion were:

- a. Digital infrastructure and maintenance were not typically grant-funded, requiring internal resources. Around £40 million had been allocated across capital and operating budgets, including a provisional allowance for fire safety and Building Safety Act requirements. Further clarity would follow detailed surveys and liability estimates.
- b. The budget had assumed a 2% pay increase across the board, which was below inflation. Broader inflation assumptions varied by area, averaging 3–3.5%. In some areas, such as digital, multi-year contracts provided partial protection. It was noted that the recently announced public sector pay award and constraints on tuition fee increases would present a challenge. Discussions were planned with Deans over the summer to consider where selective tuition fee increases might help offset inflationary pressures.

Resolved: That the 2025/26 Operating Budget of £1,418 million and the Capital Budget of

£215 million be approved.

Reports

17. The President presented his report (Paper 8.2). In the context of the Government's Spending Review and emerging Industrial Strategy, the overall environment was viewed as broadly positive. Research funding had been protected at current levels, accompanied by a strong government commitment to maintaining the UK association with major international research programmes. Science, technology, and innovation had been placed at the centre of the national growth agenda, aligning closely with Imperial's strengths. Although macro-level decisions were generally favourable, there remained concern about the level of research funding through established streams such as UKRI. Continued vigilance and dialogue were seen as necessary to ensure that policy announcements translated into effective funding allocations.
18. The 6% levy on international student tuition fees suggested in the Spending Review would impact Imperial by around £25 million. The levy was included in Department of Education plans without wider consultation, raising concerns about its impact on universities. For Imperial, this loss of £25 million would compromise the University's ability to cross-subsidise research, support the education of UK undergraduates and offer taught master's programmes in key areas of STEM relevant to the UK's industrial strategy and economic growth. The levy risked forcing a rethink of major capital investments, including the campus development critical to West Tech London.

ACTION: A briefing note on the levy to be circulated to Council members, to support discussions with relevant stakeholders.

19. The President provided an update on progress with the implementation of the Strategy, highlighting advancements related to the global hubs - particularly in Singapore, where over 30 researchers were now based. The hub was already serving as a strong showcase for Imperial's presence in Asia, with significant programmes in security of medical devices and decarbonisation, along with substantial new research collaborations with Singaporean universities, industry, and government. The new Hubs had made a strong start, with recent visits receiving positive feedback, and they were now showing great potential, particularly in research. More broadly, Hubs were proving effective in building scale, partnerships, and reputation in key regions. Continued momentum could justify further resource allocation.

20. On campus, this time of year was always full, with exams, graduations, summer schools, and open days. President Macron's visit included engaging discussions and the launch

of a new trilateral programme with the French National Centre for Scientific Research focused on AI and resilience. The collaboration, which had been a decade in the making, reflected deepening ties.

21. In discussion, there were some concerns that the proposed levy could act as a broad tax on successful universities, especially given that a recent OfS report found 40% of universities had budgets reliant on increasing numbers of overseas students.
22. The Provost presented his report (Paper 8.3). A number of initiatives were underway to strengthen Imperial's academic environment and global competitiveness. New academic titles were being introduced to better align with internationally recognised systems, prompting a broader review of promotion and support processes, including enhanced probation programmes for early-career academics. The launch of the Schools of Convergence Science had further elevated the University's interdisciplinary profile, particularly in areas addressing major societal challenges. Meanwhile, the venture fund continued to make good progress, despite broader capital constraints.
23. He also noted that:
 - a. The Government's Global Talent Fund, launched in June as part of the UK's Industrial Strategy, aimed to attract and support world-class researchers and innovators relocating to the UK. Administered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the fund provided full financial support without requiring match funding. As Imperial was among the institutions selected to benefit, work was ongoing to develop strategies to enhance overseas recruitment.
 - b. Student recruitment remained strong, with notable success in attracting high-quality students from widening participation and key international markets.
 - c. Imperial had achieved a strong and sustained performance in the National Student Survey (NSS), ranking at the top of the Russell Group in the second quartile. The School of Medicine had performed exceptionally well, leading across all categories within the Group. Many other departments also delivered strong results across a broad range of measures.
24. The Chief Operating Officer presented his report (Paper 8.4), which provided updates on the implementation of the enabling roadmap. He highlighted that:
 - a. The Great Service Programme remained on track, with preparations progressing toward the August 2026 technology go-live. The programme represented a significant organisational shift, with Faculty Chief Operating Officers actively engaged in the implementation of new systems and ways of working. While these changes offered opportunities for simplification and

improved efficiency, they would require sustained attention from academic and administrative leadership over the coming year, particularly during the critical post-implementation phase.

b.

[Paragraph redacted: Commercially Sensitive]

c. The year-end forecast was broadly in line with budget expectations. Based on leading indicators, financial performance was likely to exceed forecasts, which had already projected Imperial's strongest results in over a decade. This placed the University in a modestly robust financial position, with the challenge now to sustain and improve upon this performance.

25. The points raised in discussion included that:

- a. Innovation space demands and cash flow reliance required careful stress-testing. Experience from other investments showed that achieving full occupancy was possible but required time to build gradually. The financial model for Plot 3 was being revisited to reflect more realistic assumptions around occupancy.
- b. London's life science space supply had steadily increased, though demand remained mixed due to a more fragmented market compared to Oxford and Cambridge. While the government's commitment to East West Rail was a factor, current dynamics were largely driven by present market conditions. Challenges around supply and competition persisted, underscoring the importance of leveraging the brand to maintain value in this environment.

Annual Report from the ICU President

26. The ICU President presented her annual report (Paper 9). She emphasised the positive Union's NSS results, with student voice and Imperial College Union (ICU) scores both increasing by 5%. While there was still work to be done, the progress was encouraging, with ICU remaining ahead of the Russell Group average. Ms. Boutrolle thanked key individuals who had supported her significantly over the past two years: Professor

Hugh Brady, Professor Ian Walmsley, Robert Kerse, Faculty Deans, Richard Martin, Professor Peter Haynes, Tony Lawrence, Jane Hay, Jenny Rae, Sarah Cary, and Faculty Senior Tutors.

27. The Chair of Council expressed sincere appreciation for the extraordinary amount of work, dedication, and achievements demonstrated by Ms. Boutrolle during her tenure, acknowledging her contributions as instrumental in driving continued progress and success.

Advancement Annual Report

28. The Vice-President (Advancement) presented her annual report (Paper 10). She highlighted that while the current year's fundraising goal had not yet been fully met, positive momentum was evident. The campaign had raised £48 million to date, £1.6 million since the report had been circulated, and this represented the highest level of giving in at least five years. The prospect pipeline had grown significantly, from 500 at the start of the year to over 6,500, allowing fundraisers to focus their efforts effectively.
29. Recruitment to the Division was progressing well, with a new Director joining later in the month alongside other team leaders. These appointments were intended to strengthen the campaign's leadership and enhance its execution.
30. A compelling and consistent campaign narrative was being developed, supported by a communications strategy to ensure clear and engaging messaging. The refined story would be presented to Council in the autumn.

Audit and Risk Committee: Risk Management Framework

31. The Registrar and University Secretary introduced the Director of Institutional Compliance and Risk Management and presented the risk management framework (Paper 11), which had been recommended to Council by the Audit and Risk Committee. The framework and accompanying Principal Risks had undergone extensive review over the past year and were intended to clarify Imperial's overall risk profile while establishing a more structured and consistent approach to identifying, assessing, and escalating risk. This marked a broader cultural shift toward a more strategic, institution-wide perspective with clear accountability for risk ownership. The framework had been iteratively developed to ensure it was robust and fit for purpose, supporting Imperial's strategic objectives amid a volatile external environment and internal change. It also provided a clear mechanism to escalate key risks to Council,

facilitating timely discussion and effective mitigation.

32. The accompanying summary risk map set out 12 principal risks, providing a structured basis for prioritisation. The supporting appendices tracked movements in risk scores over time, assessed the impact of mitigations, and identified both aspirational and emerging risks. Importantly, the framework included an assessment of risk tolerance, highlighting where risks sat outside acceptable levels or where mitigation efforts risked exceeding what was proportionate to available resources. It was acknowledged that principal risks were interconnected and should not be considered in isolation. This interdependency was reflected in the analysis, which also included detailed information for each risk - covering assigned owners, existing controls, and planned actions. Financial sustainability and cyber security were identified as the top two risks, each requiring distinct and tailored mitigation strategies.

Resolved: the Risk Management Policy, the Principal Risk Reporting Framework, and the Principal Risks be approved.

Annual Report on Safety, Fire, and Health

33. The Chief Operating Officer presented the annual report (Paper 12). The reporting period had been relatively uneventful. During this time, the University Management Board continued to strengthen its approach to health and safety, focusing on both development and promotion. As noted at the previous Council meeting, regulatory activity remained wide-ranging, with particular attention currently on fire safety, underscoring the ongoing commitment to the safety of students and staff. Over the past year, significant progress had been made, particularly within the Property team, with a shift from a construction-specific focus to a more embedded, institution-wide culture of assurance and consistent health and safety reporting.

Chair's Report

34. The Chair unstarred the governance item regarding the amendments to the Charter to remove the requirement to maintain a Court (Paper 14.1). At the last meeting, it was reported that Court members had expressed uncertainty about the Court's purpose, and alternative engagement methods were being explored. Since then, the Privy Council had informally confirmed that Council may proceed with the proposed changes. Current Court members had been informed, with several expressing their support. It was agreed to proceed with a written special resolution to implement the change.

35. He reported that, on 24 June, he had taken Chair's action to approve the establishment of a liaison office in India for Imperial Global India (Paper 8.1). Due to requirements from the Indian partners, Council was required to formally ratify this resolution.

Resolved: That the application to establish a Liaison Office in India to support Imperial Global India be approved, confirming the Chair's action taken on 24 June 2025.

36. Professor Lightstone, Mr. N. Henry, and Ms. A. MacIntosh-LaRocque left the meeting for the discussion of their appointments.

37. The Chair presented the recommendations from the Nominations Committee (Paper 8.1). The elections of Nico Henry as ICU President and ex officio member of Council, and Professor Liz Lightstone as senior Professorial member of Council, were formally noted. The Registrar and University Secretary provided an update regarding the fit and proper status of new members, as reviewed by the Nominations Committee. Council would be updated on the search for a Provost and Deputy President shortly.

Resolved:

- a. That James Seppala be appointed as an Independent Member of Council for a 4-year term of office from 1 August 2025,
- b. That James Seppala be appointed as an Independent Member of the Property Committee, from 1 August 2025,
- c. That the appointment of an external member of the Property Committee to succeed Dame Alison Nimmo be delegated to the Nominations Committee, in liaison with the Chair of Property Committee and the Chief Operating Officer.
- d. That Anthea MacIntosh-LaRocque be appointed as a Student Member of Council from 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2026, and
- e. That the revised Ordinance 8: Officers of the University be approved, stipulating that the Provost, by virtue of their office, shall serve as Imperial's nominee on the Council of the Corporation of the Hall of Arts and Sciences (Royal Albert Hall).

Starred items

38. The Chair confirmed that there had been no other requests to discuss the starred items, and Council noted the reports from the Audit and Risk Committee (Paper 13.1), Finance Committee (Paper 13.2) and Property Committee (Paper 13.3), and the Annual Report on the Use of the Seal (Paper 14.5).

39. Council received the proposed amendments to Ordinance 12: Use of Imperial Seal (Paper 14.2)

Resolved: That the proposed amendments to Ordinance 12: Use of Imperial Seal, to permit the use of an electronic seal, be approved.

40. Council received the future Council meeting dates (Paper 14.3)

Resolved: That the future Council meeting dates be approved.

41. Council received the updated staff code of conduct (Paper 14.4)

Resolved: That the revised staff code of conduct be approved with immediate effect.

Any other business

42. The Chair thanked the outgoing Council members. Ms. C. Boutrolle and Mr. C. Cooper were acknowledged for their outstanding contributions to the community. Dr. M. Safa's service would be formally recognised at the September Council dinner.

43. The Provost reminded members of a drop-in session after lunch to discuss the Venture Fund, featuring the fund CEOs and other team members.

The meeting closed at 12.35, followed by a closed session with the President and Independent Members.