

First published in 1949, *Felix* is released weekly during term time and is distributed around Imperial's London campuses. All students, staff, and alumni are welcome to contribute to the paper.



KEEP THE CAT FREE | SINCE 1949

Staff petition College to discuss merits of IHRA antisemitism definition

Jewish Society members slam effort as a 'petty swipe' when 'antisemitism is rife across higher education'.

News Writer
MOHAMMAD MAJLISI

President Hugh Brady and Provost Ian Walmsley have responded to calls from the local branch of a universities trade union to discuss Imperial's use of the antisemitism definition adopted by the UK Government.

University and College Union (UCU) Imperial, which represents academic and support staff at the College, sent a letter last Friday to President Hugh Brady asking that

Editor-in-Chief
JAMIE JOHN

he 'facilitate a public discussion on the merits of the IHRA definition of antisemitism'.

Responding this Wednesday, Brady and Walmsley said that Imperial's position 'is based on the law of England and Wales', and has 'been developed through extensive consultation with our community, including our trade unions'.

UCU Imperial has vowed to 'fully support members attacked' → **READ MORE ON 4**



→ **READ MORE ON 4**

Walt Gao for *Felix*

No *Felix* next week!

We're taking a short break and will be back on 23rd February.

EDITORIAL

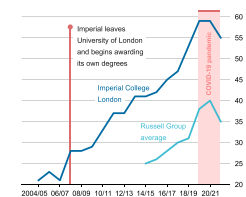
Revolving doors at ICU



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NEWS

3 in 5 IC students get Firsts



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ENVIRONMENT

Tales of Unsung Wilderness 5



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MUSIC

Declan McKenna's latest album

Felix got an early listen to McKenna's latest release.

Read our verdict!

→ **READ MORE ON 17**

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DECLARATION

At *Felix*, we believe that it is always in the interest of the students to be in the know. Transparency in the workings of the College and the work of your student representatives is key. Therefore I, the *Felix* Editor, on behalf of the team promise that:

We will, to the best of our ability, tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

We will keep your confidence and will only publish something you say to us if you have explicitly said that we can.

We will work to expose unfairness and discrimination in all forms that it takes at the College.

We will treat fairly any article sent to us, regardless of point of view, and do our best to work with you to prepare it for publication.

Signed by:
JAMIE JOHN
Editor-in-Chief

Copyeditor

TARUN NAIR

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Felix Editorial Team:



JAMIE JOHN
Editor-in-Chief,
News Editor



ZANNA BUCKLAND
Deputy Editor-in-Chief,
Books Editor



MIKE BUZADJI
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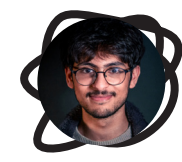
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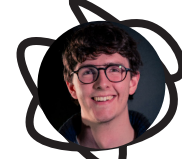
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EDITORIAL

Revolving doors at ICU

In 2022, Imperial carried out a review of its governance arrangements. It brought on board a number of parties to help with the project: internal experts, management consultants – and one Lloyd James, who had just finished his term as President of Imperial College Union (ICU).

The Union President wears a number of hats, but the most intrinsic part of their job – together with four other Officer Trustees – is to represent to the university the interests of students.

There is no indication of impropriety on James's part; indeed, he has served the Union in a multitude of roles since starting at Imperial in 2013. But his work in the College – which commenced in the very same month that he finished as President – is the most prominent example of Union sabbatical officers gliding from student rep roles and into jobs at Imperial.

the age-old concept of 'revolving doors.' How can OTs credibly claim to represent students if they have a vested interest in pleasing the College to get a job at Imperial?

For James, the problem is

figure salaries. However, he denies that his governance role at Imperial played any significant role in him securing the law

– six of those eight joined within weeks or months of leaving elected office. And though this does yield some advantages to both students and College, there are plausible scenarios in which the student voice could be compromised.

Take, for example, the Deputy President (Education), who might be required to take up the case of an individual students who is unhappy with how the College has treated them. This could feasibly bring them into direct conflict with the College teams they wish to work for in future, forcing them to make a decision:

will they serve the interests of the student, or their potential employer?

James is right to underscore how OTs can improve the student experience when given jobs at Imperial. But perhaps there is a middle ground that allows students to benefit from such arrangements while

avoiding – or at least mitigating – the conflicts of interest that arise from them.

In government, ex-ministers must register with the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments, which advises them if they wish to take up external appointments within two years of leaving office. This is admittedly excessive for a student union sabbatical role.

A more reasonable alternative, this newspaper proposes, is a cooling-off period of at least one year, during which OTs cannot join the College. It reduces the chances that an OT's decision-making will be swayed, while still allowing those who are truly dedicated to improving the student experience to return to a job at Imperial.

more one of appearances than practical conflicts of interest. He says that his job at Imperial emerged as a possibility only towards the end of his term as President, as the College started work on its governance review.

"I had worked quite closely with the governance team at Imperial, and it would be a pain to bring new people in for a short-term project," he explains. He conducted organisational research, held discussions with staff, and wrote briefing papers – "work that benefitted from my background knowledge of governance arrangements within the College."

Since leaving the College, James has joined a prestigious Magic Circle law firm that pays its newly qualified solicitors six-

traineeship.

He is keen to highlight the benefits of OTs taking on College roles, noting that they bring with them a unique perspective, as former students themselves, and are invested in improving the experience of current students.

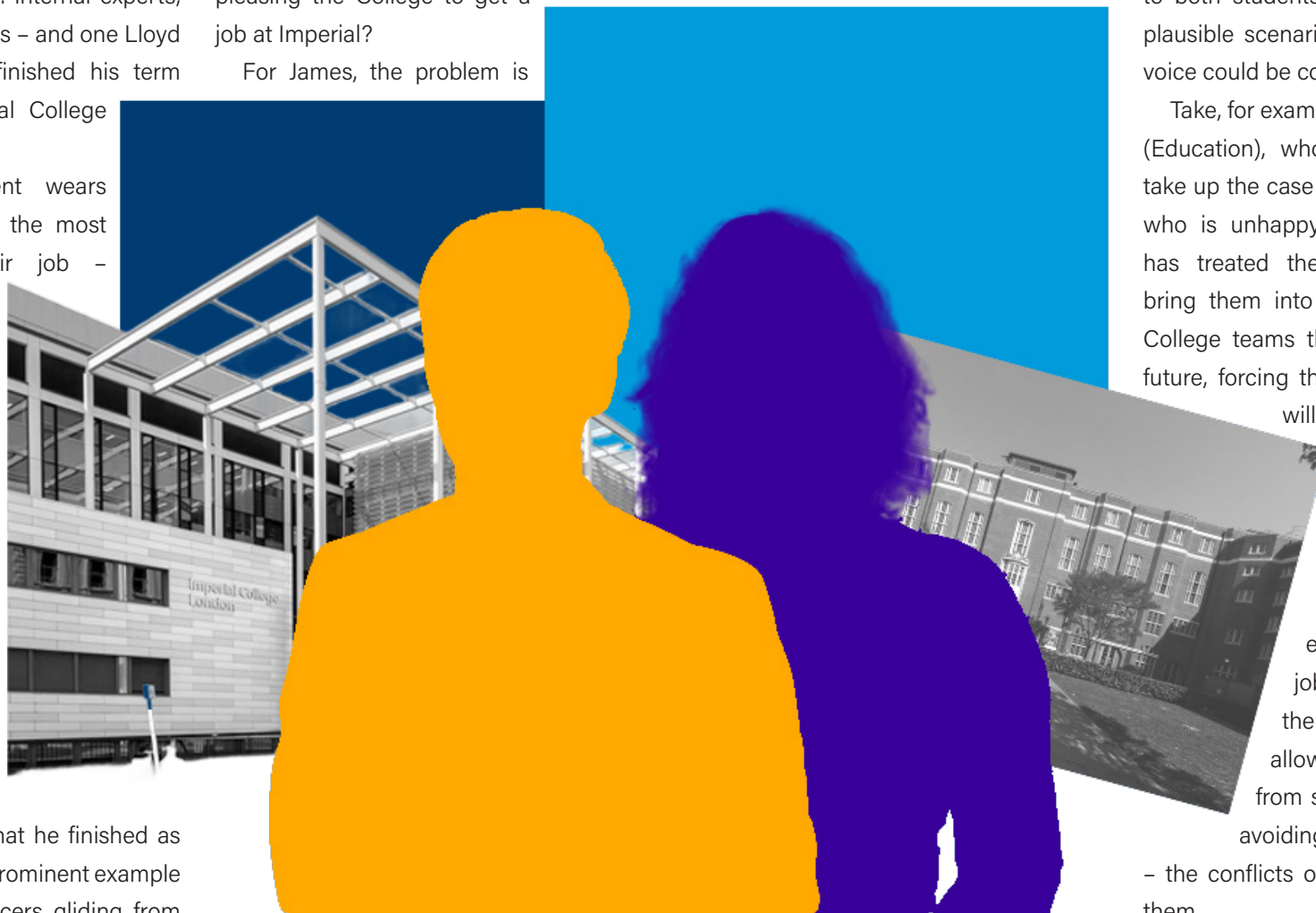
Furthermore, James describes Imperial as a "huge, siloed organisation", so that it is possible to have a cordial relationship with one part of the institution, while being confrontational – if so needed – with another.

Nevertheless, there are legitimate concerns to be had about the extent of the revolving doors phenomenon at Imperial. At least eight former OTs have joined the ranks of College staff in the past decade



How can Officer Trustees credibly claim to represent students, if they have a vested interest in pleasing the College to get a job at Imperial?

It raises serious questions about the ability of Officer Trustees (OTs) to represent students and brings to the fore



NEWS

or victimised for supporting Palestinian rights or through abuse of [the] IHRA definition’.

It alleges that the definition has been used at Imperial and other universities ‘to intimidate and/or discipline staff and students who have spoken out about the ongoing events in Gaza’.

It cites a letter sent by the College Registrar to the UCU branch secretary and at least one College student, that alleged chants by pro-Palestinian protestors at Imperial were ‘antisemitic’ and ‘unlawful (racist) speech’.

The decision to lobby Imperial for discussion of the IHRA definition followed a motion voted through at its most recent all-members meeting, where 87% of attendees voted in favour, 13% abstained,

and none voted against.

A representative of UCU Imperial said the union “is not at a liberty” to disclose the number of attendees but that the meeting was quorate – meaning that over 5% of its membership was present.

“All members of Imperial UCU, many of whom are Jewish, were invited to attend the meeting, and the agenda and proposed motion were sent to all members several days in advance.

“We do not take demographic data on attendees, but can confirm that Jewish members of the union were involved, both in assisting in drafting the motion and in speaking on the issue at the meeting.”

A spokesperson for Imperial Jewish Society dismissed the resolution as “a poor, pathetic, and deliberate attempt to water

down the definition of antisemitism [that] isn’t worthy of a statement in response.”

“Instead of telling the Jewish students and faculty what antisemitism isn’t, they should look inwards and check their own ranks.”

The IHRA definition of antisemitism has been used by Imperial since 2020 to ‘help raise awareness of antisemitism and how it manifests itself in society’ – though the College has not formally adopted it.

The definition is used to varying degrees by a total of 134 universities within the UK.

UCU Imperial has taken issue with what it perceives to be a conflation of antisemitism with anti-Zionism. Antisemitism refers to prejudice against Jewish people, whereas anti-Zionism is opposed to Zionism, a movement that

supports the development and protection of the State of Israel.

Critics of Zionism cite Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, where it has been accused of violating international human rights law, and its blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the region.

“The IHRA definition includes 11 “examples” of antisemitism, seven of which focus on the State of Israel,’ wrote UCU Imperial in its letter to the College.

Brady and Walmsley note that ‘our intolerance of antisemitism and our use of the IHRA definition does not prevent criticism of Israel or the actions of the Israeli government, just as all other nation states and government are open to critical discussion.’

Protestors call on Imperial to cut ties and “take a stance”

News Writer
SAFIYYA AHMED

Activists congregated on Wednesday afternoon to put pressure on the College to stop its work with arms companies that they allege have contributed to the IDF’s activities in Gaza, and called on Imperial to better represent the student voice.

“We are in the right and [our government and management] are in the wrong,” a member of Imperial UCU said over a megaphone to a group of 30.

Protestors claimed that Imperial was “supplying one side [of the war]” through the research it conducts with companies such as Caterpillar. “Your labs are drenched in Palestinian blood,” they chanted. Imperial “likes to claim it doesn’t take a side when it in fact is supplying one side,” said one.

Caterpillar, the world’s largest

manufacturer of construction equipment, has attracted the ire of human rights groups such as Amnesty International for supplying the IDF with DC9 armoured bulldozers, which the IDF has used to destroy Palestinian homes.

There is no indication that Imperial has broken the law in its relationships with Caterpillar, and the company itself has said it has ‘neither the legal right nor the means to police individual use of its equipment.’

A protest organiser called the IHRA’s antisemitism definition a “false conflation of antisemitism and anti-Zionism”.

Imperial UCU has called for a discussion on the IHRA definition (see cover story), and a 75-year-old Jewish member of the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network present at the protest agreed that the definition “should not have been accepted”. “Being Jewish and being a Zionist are very different things,” they added.

A spokesperson for Jewish Society called the Jewish Anti-Zionist Network a

‘radical fringe group’, claiming that the ‘vast majority of Jews are Zionist’ and support the ‘Jewish people’s right to self-determination, and Israel’s right to exist.’ They called Wednesday’s protestors hypocritical, saying they had failed to

properly acknowledge the events of 7th October when Hamas orchestrated a terrorist attack on Israel, kidnapping and killing civilians.



Wednesday’s protest. Walt Gao for Felix

Universities UK to review international admissions after 'cash for courses' scandal

Foundation courses under scrutiny after *Sunday Times* investigation.

**Editor-in-Chief
JAMIE JOHN**

Overseas student admission procedures are to be reviewed following a *Sunday Times* investigation that found 15 Russell Group universities – not including Imperial – are offering cash-flush overseas applicants alternative entry routes onto degree programmes, with lower grade requirements.

Universities UK (UUK), which represents 142 higher education providers including Imperial, announced a series of reviews last Friday to ensure 'that the system is fair, transparent, and robust.'

'Where there is practice that falls below the standards of our universities and their representatives, we will take action,' it said.

The *Sunday Times* investigation found that universities including Bristol, Durham, and Warwick are offering foundation-year courses that allow access to undergraduate degrees with far lower grades than the usual entry requirements.

Imperial does not offer foundation-year courses and its website says it 'does not have any signed agreements with any agents or counsellors anywhere in the world. We will not pay anyone commission for sending us a student, nor endorse the services they provide.'

A person familiar with the College's policies said it

does not discount or reduce grades for international students, and continually monitors qualification equivalencies.

At the University of Durham, to study Economics, applicants must normally obtain A*AA grades at A-Level. But overseas students can enrol, for a fee, onto a foundation course that requires only CCD A-Level grades. Overseas students aged 16 and 17 are also accepted onto the alternative pathway, with only 5 Cs at GCSE. 74% of students those on Durham's foundation programmes progress onto degrees.

Responding to the *Sunday Times* article, Durham University said that the foundation requirements are 'not comparable to entry requirements [for] our degree programmes'.

UUK says that it will review the Agent Quality Framework, that outlines best practice for recruitment agents working on behalf of universities.

International foundation programmes will be assessed against foundation programmes available to Home students for quality and comparability, and UUK will update its code of practice to 'clearly state its applicability to international recruitment'.

UUK head Vivienne Stern reiterated that overseas foundation programmes 'do not guarantee entry' to degrees, saying that they 'are designed for students who come from different education systems.'

Acknowledging that 'the entry requirements for international and domestic students to full degree programmes should be equivalent,' she said that nevertheless, some overseas students 'will need bridging courses to enable them to progress to UK degrees.'

She promised to 'work with government' to address weaknesses in relation to the use of agents.

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Grade inflation: nearly 3 in 5 Imperial students awarded Firsts in 2021/22

Editor-in-Chief
JAMIE JOHN

The share of degrees awarded the top grade at Imperial has soared over the past decade, with nearly three in five undergraduate students receiving a First-Class Honours in 2021/22.

Imperial awards the greatest proportion of First-Class degrees of any higher education institution in the

country, exceeding the average for the Russell-Group, a consortium of top UK universities, by 20 percentage points.

The proportion of men awarded top grades has exceeded that of women for every year on record except for 2019/20, the first year of the pandemic. The trend opposes that seen across the UK university sector, where in recent years, a greater share of women have achieved Firsts than men.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a six-

point increase in the proportion of students awarded a First, in line with national trends. But the Faculty of Medicine shot up far in excess of its peers, awarding Firsts to 85% of its Medical Biosciences graduates and intercalating medical students.

During the pandemic, Imperial implemented policies to help students whose productivity had been impacted.

In March 2021, the College introduced a university-wide 'safety net': every department guaranteed that the

proportion of Firsts awarded to a given cohort would match or exceed the share awarded in the three years immediately preceding the pandemic.

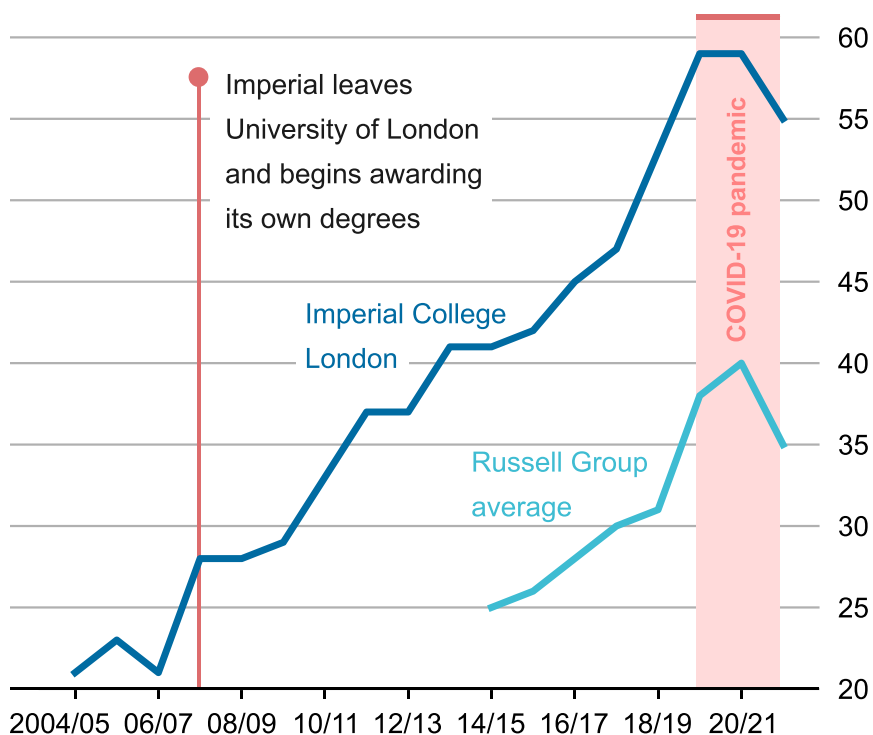
The phenomenon of grade inflation pre-dates Covid: the proportion of First-Class degrees awarded at Imperial nearly doubled in the decade to 2018/19.

It is only in 2021/22, the most recent year for which data is available, that grade inflation has faltered, with the share of top degrees awarded falling four points from an all-time high the year before.



Imperial awards more Firsts than any other UK university

Proportion of degrees awarded First-Class Honours (%)

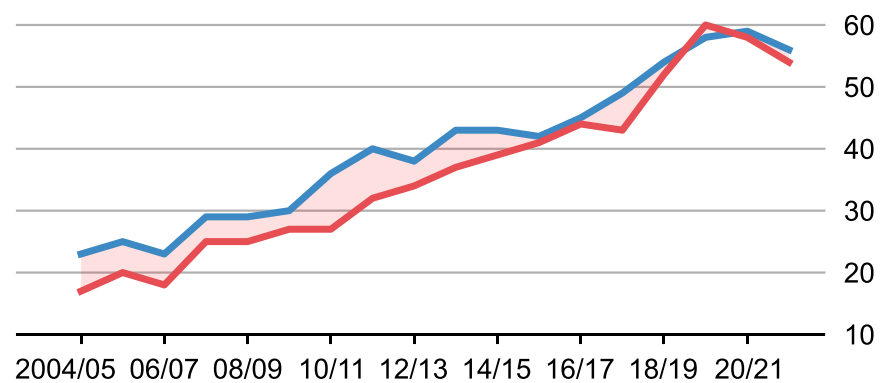


Felix

Sources: Imperial College London Student Statistics, 'First Degrees Obtained', Higher Education Statistics Agency DT051 Table 16 (CC BY 4.0)

Only in 2019/20 were a greater proportion of women awarded Firsts than men

Proportion of men/women awarded First-Class Honours (%)

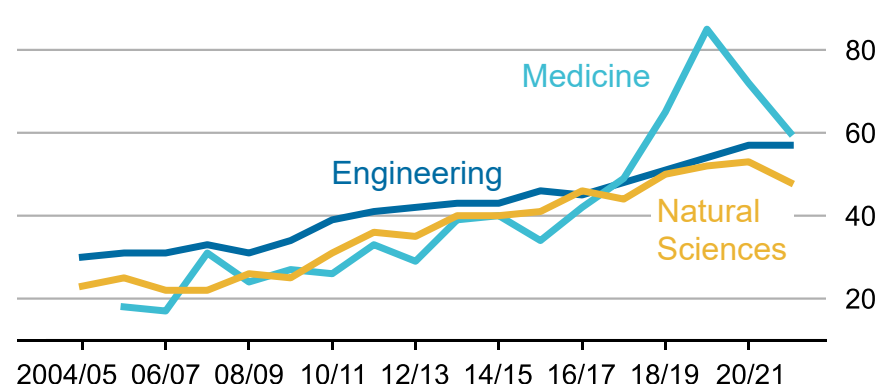


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Data for non-binary students omitted due to lack of sufficient data. Source: Imperial College London Student Statistics. 'First Degrees Obtained'

The Faculty of Medicine awarded Firsts to 85% of Medical Biosciences grads and intercalating medical students in 2020

Proportion of degrees awarded First-Class Honours by faculty (%)



Felix

Faculty of Medicine data does not include MBBS, which is graded Pass or Fail. Source: Imperial College London Student Statistics. 'First Degrees Obtained'

Imperial to host 2024 London Student Sustainability Conference

The conference comes to the South Ken campus on 21st February.

ICU Deputy President (Finance & Services)
STEPHANIE YEUNG

As an Officer Trustee team, we decided early within our term that we would make sustainability our common objective and a priority for the Union. So, when the opportunity came to put Imperial's name forward to host the sixth London Student Sustainability Conference (LSSC), we did not hesitate to step forward.

Created in 2019, the LSSC provides students in London with a platform to showcase how their ideas, research, and projects are helping to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

The SDGs were set out back in 2015 as an 'urgent call for action' by the UN for all countries to work together to pave the way to a sustainable future by 2030. The 17 goals focus on the environment, economy, social issues and more, and are by nature, interlinked.

We, your Officer Trustees, saw this as a valuable opportunity to bring together the many individuals and departments within Imperial, that are passionate about sustainability, and collectively work towards the delivery of a meaningful event.

Imperial was selected by the collaborating universities to host LSSC 2024, and planning has been underway since. I have been the main point of coordination for the conference from within the Union, with backing and support from the Imperial Sustainability Hub, the Grantham Institute, and senior leaders within the College.

Within the College, the Education Office is running a project to map the UN SDGs to all curricula across departments and degrees. If you are interested in hearing more, or helping with the project, please contact the project lead Mike Tennant (m.tennant@imperial.ac.uk).

Behind the scenes

It takes a village to deliver a conference. This village includes the many staff and students from our

collaborating universities, each of them playing different roles to realise LSSC 2024.

One of the key players behind the scenes is our Student Delivery Group, formed and led by students to take upon the challenges and responsibilities required to deliver LSSC 2024.

Marios Fokas Tsamichas, Imperial Business School alumnus and a current UCL student at the Bartlett School of Environment, Energy, and Resources, has been actively involved in the Student Delivery Group's work.

He has found it extremely rewarding to "assist experts on the coordination and delivery of one of workshops", as well as the opportunity to "chair the presentation sessions" an invaluable experience. Marios has also been working closely with me to organise the conference logistics to ensure a smooth experience for our participants.

Overall, Marios shares that he has "found this conference to be a vital opportunity for London students, such as myself, to delve into and engage with sustainability issues, and I highly recommend that anyone who's eager to take part in the conversation on environmental progress and development join us at the conference this year and beyond!"

Join us!

LSSC 2024 has a packed agenda that will feature:

- Welcome Address: Keynote speeches from Harriet Wallace (Sustainability Strategy Director at Imperial), and Dr Omnia El Omrani (Climate Change and Health Junior Policy Fellow at Imperial)
- Presentations & Posters: A showcase of students' ideas, projects, and research relating to the UN SDGs
- Interactive Workshops: Engage in discussions reflecting on circular economies, net-zero pathways, climate justice, and more ...
- Networking Event: Connect with students, academics and professionals from universities across London

I highly encourage you to join us at the conference and hear from your peers about their projects and to become inspired by their innovations. Even if you can't make every session, come take advantage of the collaborative atmosphere brewing across Imperial's campus throughout the day!

The conference is also a hybrid event and will be available for you to join online.

See you all at the conference!



Stephanie Yeung is Deputy President (Finance & Services) at Imperial College Union. Imperial College Union

LSSC 2024 is one of the highlight events of Imperial's Sustainability Fortnight, which will run from 19th February until 1st March. Be sure to check out all the other events organised by students and staff within the Imperial community!

Date / Time	Location
21 February 2024 10 AM - 7 PM	Imperial College London

Register now for your FREE ticket

www.city.ac.uk/LSSC-2024

SCIENCE

Exploring Apple's vision with the Vision Pro

Apple's Vision Pro is the company's first-of-its-kind product launch and here is why we are so excited for it.

Science Writer
CHARLES CALZIA

Science Writer
TANISH BANSALL

At its essence, the Apple Vision Pro stands as a (extremely extremely expensive) virtual reality headset, poised to redefine immersive experiences in the tech landscape. The last time that Apple launched a new category of products was all the way back in 2015 with the Apple Watch. Apple has already sold upwards of 200,000 headsets according to MacRumors, within just over a week of launching in the US, and they are predicted to hit 600,000 sales by the end of this year.

First of its kind

The Vision Pro is a first-generation product, and it has all the characteristics of one. There are some things it does extremely well, putting it leagues ahead of anything else on the market, but there are also a few massive flaws. It's heavy, the battery life is short, some of its features are borderline unfinished – but this is part of what makes it so exciting. 10 years down the line, will this piece of technology have changed the way we live?

Unlike Meta's Quest headset, which is widely used for gaming, the Vision Pro markets itself as a "spatial computer", but what is its actual use? At this moment, it doesn't seem to have a clear use case. However, that doesn't stop it from having a suite of super cool features, a few of which we'll explore.

Vision Pro features

The Vision Pro can connect to your MacBook and allow you to have a virtual display of the Mac's screen, meaning you can create a portable multi-screen workspace. At its core, the Vision Pro is a virtual and augmented reality headset, allowing you to bring virtual objects to your space, and to take you to other environments. So now you can video call on a theatre-sized screen or explore the surface of the Moon.

The headset can scan your face and create a hyper-realistic three-dimensional 'persona', which you can use as a representation of yourself during FaceTime calls.

Developing technology

Apple says the feature is in beta right now so these examples appear pretty weird. Regardless, think about what could happen as it develops – imagine a future where you can video call someone and have a life-like hologram of them right beside you? Maybe the headset will help us spend time together with our loved ones, rather than transforming the world into a frightening dystopian future.

After changing its name from Facebook to Meta,



As the first spatial computer, the Apple Vision Pro is a major leap into a new class of device.

many thought that the metaverse would be the future of virtual worlds. But in 2022, Meta's Reality Labs division lost \$13.7bn, and Meta began to refocus its efforts on AI, which seemed much more exciting. But over the past year, Zuckerberg's vision for the metaverse has shifted from fully immersive towards something that feels much more like augmented reality.

Now with the release of the Vision Pro, Meta believes it will help increase the sales of its own range of VR headsets, notably the Quest and the Quest Pro. One of the differences of the Vision Pro as opposed to the fully immersive Meta headsets, is that simply twisting the digital crown on the top of the Vision Pro allows you to

Apple Vision Pro



Top: Apple Vision Pro logo.
Bottom: The outer glass of the Apple Vision Pro.
Wikimedia Commons

adjust your immersion in the virtual world.

The dawn of spatial computing

Being the first spatial computer, the Apple Vision Pro is a major leap into a new class of device. At the Vision Pro's release, Tim Cook announced, "Today marks the beginning of a new era of computing". VisionOS, the world's first spatial operating system, is going to be continuously improved by Apple and the developers who will build apps using it.

And though it may currently seem ridiculous for people to be wandering around wearing the Vision Pro, this may become the new reality – a hybrid between the real and virtual worlds.

It is an exciting future, but to gain more widespread adoption, the Vision Pro's price tag will need to be drastically reduced, and a strong developer community must form to build compatible apps.

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ENVIRONMENT

Want to become Environment Editor in 2024-25?

Felix Environment is looking for editors for the 2024/25 academic year. Here's why you should be one.

Environment Editor SIMRAN PATEL

My co-editor and I are due to graduate from Imperial at the end of this academic year. We are looking for environmentally-conscious students with good writing and design skills to replace us as section editors for 2024/25.

Being a *Felix* Environment editor has been the highlight of my time at Imperial. I thought I would share some of the reasons why here. I hope they inspire you to join our team this autumn.

I have learnt transferable skills

Every job and further study position looks for verbal and written communication, and being a section editor teaches both. I enjoy the challenge of communicating complex science and policies in simple English, and I appreciate the intense scrutiny for spelling, punctuation, and grammar at *Felix*. Nearly every week, I need to write professional emails to important people I have never met – and sometimes have spoken conversations with them. I have used this experience to approach and speak to many potential postgraduate supervisors.

I also learnt how to use Adobe InDesign and Photoshop, so could become a graphic designer if my research career does not work out!

I meet really cool people

Outside of Imperial, I have interviewed the Secretary-General of CITES (Issue #1822) and the General Manager of Moody's Analytics (Issue #1837). I currently have an interview lined up with someone from Rainforest Foundation UK. All of these people have inspiring career paths, and it is truly an honour to hear from them, and to share their wisdom with Imperial's student body.

Through my role, I have received exclusive insights into the world of sustainability as it manifests itself at Imperial. The environment has increasingly infiltrated minds and policies at Imperial since I joined *Felix*, making this is an exciting section to edit. Sustainability Week last year was my favourite week at Imperial – through my coverage for *Felix*, I got to meet the students and staff making the campus and planet greener.

Similarly, I enjoyed speaking to the founders of Towards Net Zero (Issue #1827) and SustainaPod (this issue) – both of whom are Imperial students – about their dreams of educating young people about sustainability.

It is mind-blowing how hard both these students work on their degree and their side project.

I get to cover exciting stories



I got to attend this event on eco-anxiety for Sustainability Week 2023! Simran Patel

The best part of this job is covering stories that matter to students, staff, and alumni. Take my investigation into fossil fuel companies sponsoring the Science Museum (Issues #1829-30). I extensively researched the issue, interviewed important stakeholders, and gauged students' attitudes on fossil fuel sponsorship. Although this took up more brain space than my degree in October, I lived for the thrill of contrasting opinions and bold

accusations. I also received valuable journalism training, learning terms like 'right of reply' and 'libel'.



I enjoy making striking graphics about striking news stories – like this one about Science Museum sponsorships. Simran Patel

Everyone is super nice

Felix is active as a student society, and their social events are a great way to relax after a hard day's work. From my experience, the other section editors are very helpful when it comes to journalism techniques and InDesign tips. They are equally as good at having ethical discussions as they are telling jokes, which makes working in the office so much fun.

How to become a section editor

If this article has convinced you to become a *Felix* Environment editor, my co-editor and I are looking for reporters to cover Sustainability Fortnight this year (19th February to 1st March).

Sustainability Week will be a great opportunity for potential editors to learn what the role is like. Reporters will attend events, take or source pictures, write articles, and/or lay articles out on InDesign – we will help you out each step of the way.

Email us at environment.felix@imperial.ac.uk to learn more.

Tales of Unsung Wilderness

5: Soil centipedes

Environment Writer

SHREYAS KUCHIBHOTLA

Lift up a rock and scan for movement underneath (as you do). A few giant house spiders scuttle around in their sheet webs, a large brown centipede sprints for cover, and woodlice disperse in their characteristic animated fashion.

Just as I put the stone down, however, I notice something strange. A thin, pale yellow creature shuffles away into a crevice in the stone, looking like a worm that spawned legs. Lots of legs. A closer look at this strange being reveals hundreds of tiny legs moving in almost perfect synchrony. Before I can even process what's happening, it's gone. This ethereal beast is a soil centipede (order Geophilomorpha).

Centipedes are putatively some of the oldest known arthropods, first appearing in the fossil record over 400 million years ago. Since then, years of form-fashion tango have resulted in many versions of the perfect predator, with evolutionary bells and whistles duly added to the fundamental template of legs, forcipules (bespoke front legs tailored to deliver a noxious coup-de-grace), antennae, and venom.

Geophilomorphs, however, take specialisation to the extreme. Geophilomorpha rather poetically translates to 'built to love the earth', and these animals truly underscore this epithet — with the exception of a few species, many cannot even be found during the day as they hide in the soil.

Blindness is a common trait among animals that have evolved to be subterranean (underground) or cavernicolous (in caves) — when you rarely see light, the ability to process it gradually turns from

optional extra to a hindrance, superfluous enough to be tossed away entirely.

Centipedes range in size from a few millimetres to over a foot, with the largest species *Scolopendra gigantea* routinely hunting bats. Even among smaller representatives of this class, well-armoured and dangerous prey are nothing but a minor inconvenience.

One might think blindness would pose a hindrance to obligate carnivores, but soil centipedes seem none the worse for it. I have had the privilege of watching them hunt in laboratory conditions, and while I've never seen the actual kill, the one thing that is clear beyond doubt is their complete reliance on their sensitive antennae to detect smaller invertebrates running around in the soil.



I once found a centipede at Prince's Gate Gardens as it was in the process of burrowing into a millipede lunch

In a macabre twist, they seem to have a peculiar method of consuming their prey — tunnelling through and eating from the inside out, leaving an almost perfect husk of their unfortunate victim as a calling card.

The UK has 25 species of geophilomorphs, many of which can be found even in and around human habitation.

One way to distinguish geophilomorphs from other centipede orders is their leg count — while other orders have a fixed number of legs, geophilomorphs may show both inter- and intra-specific



A particularly large Long-horned soil centipede (*Geophilus flavus*) at the London Wetland Centre last year. Shreyas Kuchibhotla



A western yellow centipede (*Haplophilus subterraneus*) at the London Wetland Centre last year. Shreyas Kuchibhotla



A white-striped centipede (*Henia vesuviana*) found a few weeks ago. Shreyas Kuchibhotla

variation, even going as far as displaying sexual dimorphism in some cases.

Some geophilomorph families usually walk around with 200 leg pairs,

but nobody knows for certain what the advantage is. The improved dexterity

of these centipedes on land when compared to other → **READ MORE ON 12**

→ FROM P. 11: SOIL CENTIPEDES

soil-dwelling invertebrates such as earthworms could explain why they haven't completely lost their legs.

London itself has a fair variety of geophilomorphs.

The Western yellow centipede (*Haplophilus subterraneus*) is a common inhabitant of gardens and other disturbed habitats. Sporting over 160 legs and spanning 70 mm in length, it has been reported to consume plant matter every now and then, a rare trait among centipedes.

The white-striped centipede (*Henia vesuviana*) is another large species, with a greyish body that distinctly widens midway. It is a rarity elsewhere in the country but frequent under logs and stones in London and in coastal areas.

This species is known to secrete a sticky glue from its underside when confronted by predators, enough to sew a predatory beetle's mouthparts shut for several hours.

I once found one at Prince's Gate Gardens as it was in the process of burrowing into a millipede lunch. (This was well before I began macro photography, but I've included the terrible photo anyway — not for the faint of heart.)

The impressive *Geophilus flavus* is instantly recognisable by its long antennae and blood-red head, in stark contrast to its pale yellow body.

Other species like *Schendyla nemoensis* and *Geophilus truncorum* can be seen under rotting wood, while the grey and orange *Geophilus carpophagus* lives in small cracks under peeling tree bark and can be seen trundling along trunks and walls at night.

For better or for worse, we share our world with a plethora of zany characters, and blind venomous worms with legs don't even scratch the surface (pun intended). Whenever you need a break from the monotony (or excruciating stress) of academic life, go outside and flip a stone — for there is a wonderfully weird world underneath.

Climate and communication: two peas in a (Sustaina)Pod

Felix speaks to Paco Wu, an Imperial student who co-founded a sustainability podcast.

Environment Editor
SIMRAN PATEL

Last week, I had the honour of speaking to Paco Wu — a first-year Civil Engineering student at Imperial. Having co-founded a sustainability podcast called SustainaPod at school, Paco hopes to expand SustainaPod to a multi-media educational platform at Imperial. This is what he had to say.

What is SustainaPod?

SustainaPod is a youth-led podcast delving into sustainability stories across sectors. Students host episodes exploring the world of sustainability with leading practitioners and changemakers around the world. By fostering intergenerational dialogue, SustainaPod is an accessible resource empowering the next generation of sustainability practitioners to navigate their careers.

There has never been a more important time to get engaged in creating a sustainable future. The science tells us that it's not going well — and SustainaPod will cover that science — but the more important thing is how you can help. This is an industry you might be interested in, and this is how to get into that industry. We're enabling students to learn more about not only jobs in sustainability, but also how sustainability will affect industries — which it will!

The podcast is uploaded to Spotify (scan the QR code on the next page) and

YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/@sustainapod>).

How was SustainaPod founded?

We were podcasting as part of another organisation, but activity there slowed down so seven of us decided to start our own podcast. My co-founder, Belinda Ng, initiated the idea for the podcast as a fresh graduate passionate about sustainability but not sure how this could translate to a career. She found it empowering and inspiring to speak with professionals working across industries. Together with myself and a small team of interested individuals, she created the podcast to amplify these meaningful and educational conversations. Belinda graduated from Imperial's MSc in Environmental Technology in 2022.

Although Belinda and I are the faces of SustainaPod, there's a bunch of youth members that work tirelessly with us and we have experienced tremendous growth. In 2021, we were at about 14 people — but when I moved to Concord College in Shropshire, I recruited another 12 people. Concord now has its own SustainaPod branch working alongside the Hong Kong team. Since moving from Concord to Imperial, I have set up another branch here. Across the three branches we're at over 30 members.

SustainaPod Imperial consists of four

first-year students including myself. I met Rukaiya Khondaker on a Horizons course. She was interested in learning more about sustaina-



SustainaPod
on Spotify

bility, so I recruited her and she's been an integral part of SustainaPod Imperial.

Selina Yeung is from Hong Kong and went to the same school as Belinda. She

applied to us through a form on LinkedIn. Finally, Ebee Lee is one of my best friends and wants to gain greater exposure to sustainable careers. The good thing about a team of first-years is we're all willing to explore new things.

What has been your biggest achievement in the last four years?

One of my biggest personal achievements was an episode with the Vice-President of the Institute of Structural Engineering, Dr Elisabeth Marlow – as a civil engineer myself, that was special. I also did an episode with someone who was working with DALL-E, developed by OpenAI. A third achievement was that two years ago, I did an interview with The Tyre Collective – a start-up which began as a master's project at Imperial. Now being at Imperial and being part of the Climate Entrepreneurs Club Pre-Accelerator is kind of a full circle moment for me.

What is the Climate Entrepreneurs Club Pre-Accelerator?

The Climate Entrepreneurs Club's Pre-Accelerator is a competition which creates and develops climate start-ups. Teams are split into builders and ideators. We have SustainaPod and are

trying to scale up its impact and secure more funding to support our work, so we're part of the builders group. An ideator would be

someone finding an idea and a group to begin a startup. We then try to pitch the idea to mentors and hopefully win a cash prize.

How are you finding the Pre-Accelerator?

I'm very optimistic. I have been publishing each phase of the competition on social media because here at SustainaPod we believe it's the journey that counts. I'm going to continue to show people what we're doing and see what comes of it. Hopefully this continues to build up our presence on campus and our community.

As I'm a first-year and don't have the knowledge of fourth-years or PhD students. I'm going through the competition with a humble and open-minded approach, trying to learn from everyone. We're just going to put our best foot forward and see what happens. I'm looking forward for the remaining stages of the competition.

Should you win the competition, what will be the first thing you invest in?

If we do win that money, it's going straight into our funds. We are trying to build a community, invest in more equipment, and fund in-person events – because so far most of our work has been online through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our only in-person event was held at Hong Kong University with Sally Ho, a radio host and reporter from my local radio platform RTHK. We all care about sustainability but there's a vast majority of people that don't. Either they don't know enough about sustainability, or they know and don't care. The event asked how we can bring meaningful conversations to our everyday lives so that more people can care about sustainability.

How are you finding the balance between running SustainaPod and studying Civil Engineering?

Civil Engineering has been a very stressful course, and I'm only in Year 1. I care about this project, but there's got to be balance. You might say I've sacrificed my free time, and I'm not going out as much as other first-years, but I would not use the word 'sacrifice'. If you like what you're doing, it's not called sacrifice – and I like what I'm doing. Most of our members are aged 14 to 17. I'm paving a road for those members and even watching them grow up.

I want to shout out Chinny Kwok, an integral part of our team. When she first joined us, she didn't know much about sustainability. In Year 11, she had her own mini-series – this wasn't even for her CV. Then she started to work more with us, build up a leadership role, and now she's promoting SustainaPod at webinars with other organisations. She's leading our Hong Kong branch and doing such a great job. That's the opportunity that we want to bring for everyone. We will help you as much as you want to help yourself – whatever you put in, you get out.

Speaking of opportunity, do you know what you want to do after you graduate?

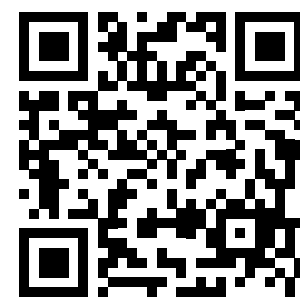
Absolutely not. I've had so many ideas for what I could do in the future, and I've been to the Careers Service. Be-

cause this is an NGO, it's not going to make me a living – but could it break even? Belinda and I have put quite a lot of our own money into the podcast, but we see it as an investment in helping young kids grow. My dream would be to work and live off this podcast, but we'll have to see.

How can Imperial students get involved?

We're always looking for interested students to support and lead podcast production. Tell us what topics you're interested in, and we can connect you to someone in our network to have a conversation. You will learn how to plan a script, have a dynamic conversation, and tell a story through editing. We will guide you through the process and publish your work. The long-term goal is to build a community of like-minded students that are open to exploring the world of sustainability and amplifying this through storytelling.

For the Pre-Accelerator, we're trying to build a website that will be an all-in-one interactive educational resource for students to access resources and stories related to sustainability topics and careers. We're aiming to have users go through a three-stage learning journey – learn, engage, and act – that positions them in the best way to enter an impact-focused and/or sustainability-focused career after graduation. Our website will spotlight the stories, insights, and experiences from those already in green careers. If anyone has any ideas for what features we can put on the website, contact us. Be it activities, quizzes, or potential interviewees, send your ideas our way and we'll read them all. To share suggestions for the website, scan the QR code.



Give feedback on SustainaPod's website!

If you are interested in joining, collaborating with, or sponsoring SustainaPod, they can be contacted on Instagram (@sustainapod_gih, @sustainapod_imperial) or LinkedIn.



SustainaPod co-founders Belinda Ng and Paco Wu. Paco Wu

One of humanity's greatest achievements to date is developing a way to directly convert the Sun's radiation into electricity.

Solar energy is generated by solar panels, which range from the millimetre-scale panels that most of us are familiar with seeing on calculators and camp lights, to the 96-cell 1.6m panels used on solar farms. The energy generation itself is performed by photovoltaic (PV) cells, which are a kind of semiconductor device that converts light directly into electricity. When light is shone upon the semiconducting silicon in a PV cell, a flow of electrons is induced in the material. This movement of electrons creates a voltage potential that generates electricity, which can either charge up batteries or be connected directly to an electrical network.

Solar is currently the cheapest form of energy on the market. Its price dropped by 82% between 2010 and 2022. This was driven by increased demand and improvements in PV-cell technology. Solar panels are also cheap and easy to install, operate, and maintain.

The perovskite-silicon 'tandem'

design for PV cells is a relatively novel technology. This design has increased cell efficiency over the current silicon cells, which will further improve the cost-effectiveness of solar energy. The term 'perovskite' refers to a particular ABX₃ crystal structure. By changing the composition of the lead halide perovskites used in tandem cells, they can be tuned to respond to different parts of the electromagnetic spectrum compared with the frequencies that simple silicon cells do. This allows for a greater efficiency in power conversion by utilising more of the incoming light. Tandem PV cells are yet to be widely commercialised, but when they do reach the market, we can expect further drops in the price of solar-energy generation.

Solar energy is arguably the least obtrusive renewable energy source and one of the most durable; the average lifetime of a solar-panel system is 25-30 years. Although some individual components – such as solar inverters – last only about half this time, they

are easy to replace, and operation can continue as normal. Because solar panels only consist of aluminium, glass, and isolated electronic components, they can also easily be recycled.

There is a huge degree of variability in solar-energy generation – electricity can only be generated during the day when the Sun is out, and this is dependent on having clear weather conditions and a sufficient amount of unshaded land. This necessitates either backup forms of power generation (usually fossil-fuel based) or robust energy storage, which is tricky to achieve at a large scale with electrical batteries. This lack of energy security is one of the biggest barriers to making a full transition to solar power.

Another major challenge in increasing solar capacity has been finding appropriate spaces in which to install the infrastructure. In urban areas, rooftop solar panels have been the most effective answer to this – a rooftop installation can typically generate enough energy for a house, allowing it to be

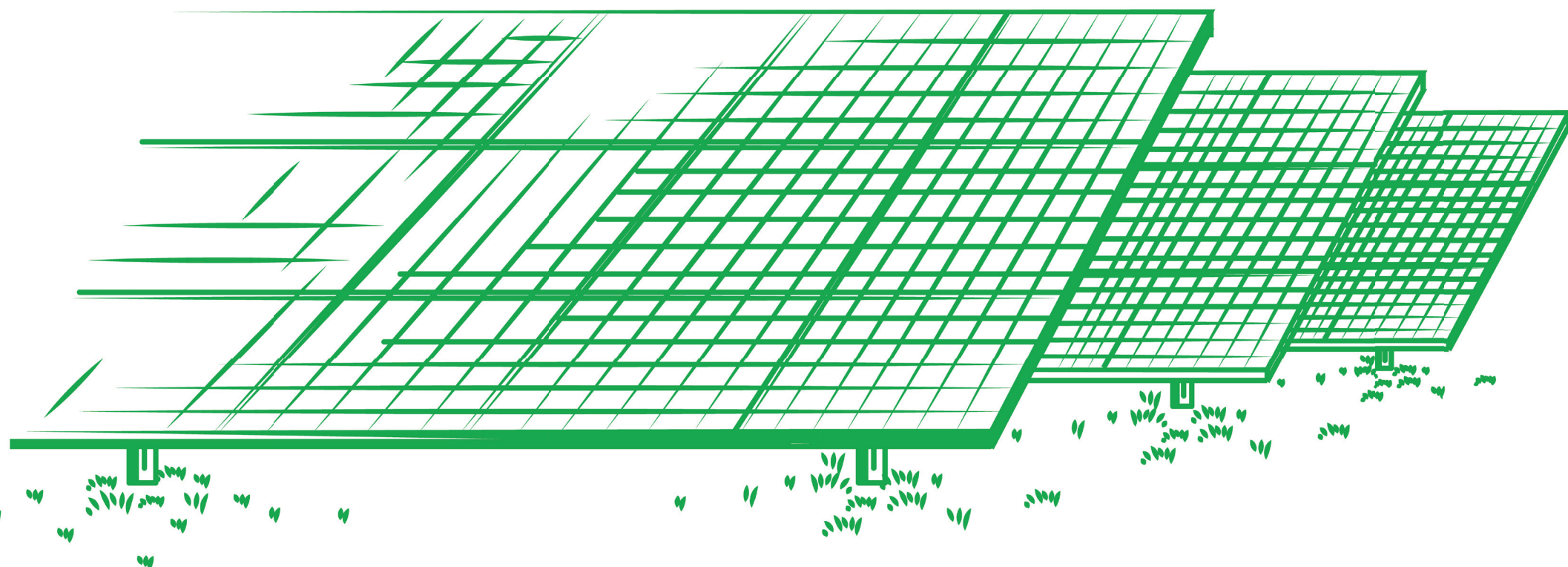
disconnected from the main energy grid. The panels are also relatively cheap and easy to install; for an average household in the UK, the necessary 4kW system costs around £7,000 and can be set up in a couple of days.

China has recently come to the forefront of solar-energy generation, having nearly doubled its capacity between 2019 and 2022. Focus has been shifted from large-scale solar farms to smaller-scale distributed projects, which refers primarily to rooftop installations. The country has run two major incentivisation schemes: the 2014 Solar Energy

Solar system



WITH ZANNA



n revolutions

for Poverty Alleviation Programme and 2021 Whole County PV Programme. These programmes subsidise solar-panel installations on rural houses, as well as providing capacity targets for cities and raising awareness that citizens can make money off any excess energy that is sold to the local grid. These programmes have largely been successful and have resulted in a huge short-term boost in local renewable-energy capacity.

However, the government is looking to decrease the programme's reliance on subsidies and instead incentivise future installations by other means. There is also a need

to improve solar-energy storage and utilisation for purposes such as heating and electric vehicles, to further reduce reliance on fossil fuels in the long term.

China has also ramped up its PV cell production in the past few years, to meet the rising global demand for efficient solar-energy technology. The country currently manufactures most of the silicon wafers and PV cells on the market today, exporting them all around the world, primarily to the US, India, Australia, and Germany.

Another novel solution for finding sufficient land for solar-energy production is agrivoltaics: combining solar farms with active agricultural farms by installing solar panels over the top of land that is being used to grow crops or rear livestock. This utilises land that has already been exploited for food production, avoiding further conversion of land into the flat, open spaces necessary for solar farms. Agrivoltaics allow agricultural activity to continue as normal, and even provide benefits such

as mitigating heat stress on crops and protecting them from severe weather. Greenhouses can even be constructed with inbuilt semi-transparent PV cells. Agrivoltaics could greatly accelerate the push to clean energy, particularly in Europe and South America, where agriculture accounts for a large portion of land use. As is the case in China's rural communities, any electricity produced by agrivoltaics can be sold to the main energy grid, creating an extra source of income for the landowner.

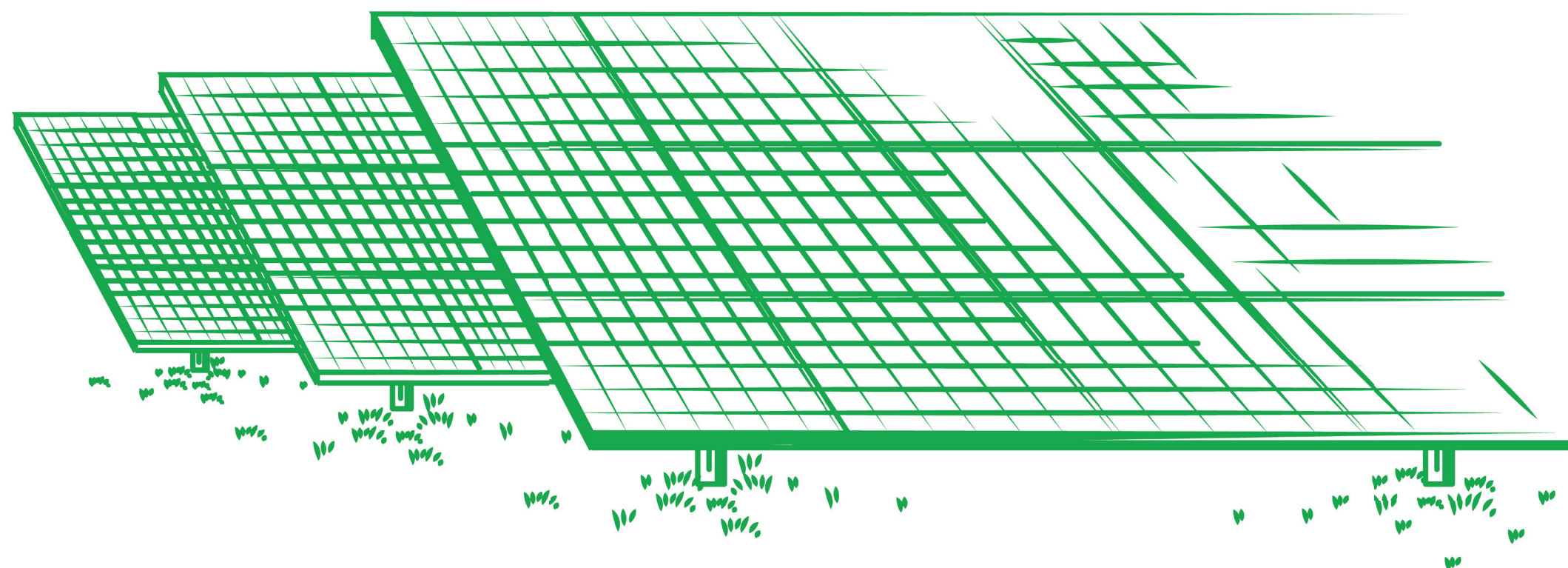
This can be seen in France, where the solar-energy company TSE is supporting farmers incorporating agrivoltaics into their existing infrastructure. The company designs solar-panel installations that won't hinder agricultural practices such as livestock rearing and crop harvesting using machines, to ensure productivity levels are maintained.

Though the increasing production capacity and price fall of solar energy is being mirrored in other energy sources

such as wind and hydroelectric, energy security remains the largest barrier to reducing reliance on non-renewable sources. However, for solar energy, it's not just the variability of weather that limits its potential for widespread use; the industry's reliance on China for manufacturing and provisioning of raw materials – such as silver and silicon – runs the risk of creating monopolies. This could result in hiked-up prices in the face of increased demand. Creative renewable energy developments such as agrivoltaics in the EU, and China's rooftop-solar projects in rural areas show that climate change mitigation efforts don't have to come at the expense of regular citizens and can provide mutual benefits to all parties involved in the long term. Energy policies must focus on both ends of development, driving both local public solar installations as well as further improvements in the technology – such as perovskite-silicon tandem PV cells – and fast-tracked commercialisation of these innovations.



A BUCKLAND



COMMENT

In honour of LGBTQ+ History Month: My Story

Imperial graduate Abellona U reflects back on his formative experiences at Imperial.

Comment Writer
ABELLONA U

I came to Imperial from Hong Kong for my BSc in Biology back in 2011. Closeted, with an engrained internalised homophobia instilled by a deeply religious school, and a Hong Kong society that was (and in some ways still is) lagging behind most of the Western world by 20 years on acceptance of LGBTQ+, I was naïve and ignorant.

My first introduction began on my very first day at Imperial. Having missed a group meeting with my personal tutor Dr Steve Cook, I ended up having a one-on-one chat with him. Through the meeting, I was nervous – until the moment he mentioned his husband in the most casual way during our conversation. The concept was so alien

to me at the time that my brain froze. I remember I just did my best to act as if it was normal (which it is!). Over the course of first year, during which Steve gave many of the lectures for biologists, we found that he took every opportunity to mention his husband in almost every lecture. The normalisation of the concept helped me immensely with my own changing attitudes towards my identity: from a misguided and self-critical state to being able to fully embrace my true self.

After my undergraduate degree, I stayed on at Imperial for an MRes working on microbiome research, which I then followed up with a PhD on metabolic profiling for the early detection of primary liver cancer. In the first year of my PhD, I went to see London Pride for the first time. It was an eye-opening experience. However, at the time, I had never openly discussed the topic of LGBTQ+ with friends, let alone come out to them, and so I went

on my own. Eventually, I began talking about it more frequently and in greater detail with friends in London as well as in Hong Kong, and I found – much to my surprise – that they were all extremely supportive. Around the same time, the Imperial 600 network, which was founded in 2006 as a network for the LGBTQ+ staff and post-graduates, began to mature. Through them, I joined the London Pride march twice in subsequent years. Actually being in the march was a truly remarkable experience.

Over the years, I have met many teaching staff and peers proudly being themselves, acting as role models or supporting the community as allies. I particularly enjoyed the sight of Queen's Tower lit up in rainbow colours during Pride History Month in February and Pride Month in July (tip: you can get a brilliant view of Queen's Tower from the top floor of SAF). It is these little things that led to the most prized moments of joy for me.

The years I spent at Imperial were a period of marked transformative self-discovery: from first coming out to family and friends as lesbian, to eventually understanding and realising that I identify as trans, the inclusive environment here provided the necessary condition for me to discover who I am. And throughout all this time, I was being supported by peers and teaching staff at Imperial. Thanks to my experiences, I genuinely believe that Imperial is a fantastic workplace for anyone who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

I recently attended my PhD graduation, and I am immensely grateful for my time at Imperial, with the LGBTQ+ experiences among the most memorable highlights. I wish to pay this back by acting as a role model and advocating for a more inclusive society.



Joining London Pride March with Imperial 600 in 2019 Abellona U

MUSIC

Declan McKenna has a Genuine Question

Felix Music got an early listen of Declan McKenna's highly anticipated indie-pop album, *What Happened to the Beach?*

Music Writer
ZANNA BUCKLAND

Declan McKenna is known for his ceiling-shattering compositions and scathing commentary on sociopo-

litical issues. It's incredible that his third studio album, *What Happened to the Beach?* (*WHTTB?*), has managed to break even more ground in terms of experimentalism than his previous releases. *WHTTB?* is set to be released on 9th February (today if you're reading this on publishing day), and I couldn't be more excited to listen through it to my heart's content.

The only singles released prior to the album were 'Sympathy' and 'Nothing Works', as well as an EP featuring 'Mulholland's Dinner and Wine' and 'Elevator Hum'. While the singles are both brilliant tracks and epitomise the style of *WHTTB?*, I think it's fair to say that they still only scratch the surface of what McKenna has achieved with the rest of the album, which I had the privilege of being granted early access to.

Tonally, *WHTTB?* sounds a lot like some of the psychedelic-punk tracks of the '80s – think David Bowie or Joy Division – making liberal use of vocal distortion and a huge range of instruments to create McKenna's desired whimsical feel. 'Phantom Buzz (Kick In)' is a prime example of this, and it takes a certain skill to produce the kinds of comfortable-yet-eclectic compositions that can appeal both to the alternative

and indie crowds, and to the mainstream pop market.

There's a roughness around the edges to tracks like 'WOBBLE' and 'I Write the News' that strongly resemble some of *The Beatles* (*White Album*) tracks. Even in numbers like 'Mezzanine' and 'It's an Act', which are a bit slower and easier to listen to, the experimental streak is maintained, reminiscent of some of the tracks on *Harry's House* but executed with a little more finesse.

There are some evidently personal themes running through the album – on 'Nothing Works', McKenna sings about the feeling of quickly becoming obsolete while still having lots to offer. It's also a commentary on his artistic freedom; in a similar vein lyrically to Arctic Monkeys' 'Teddy Picker'. He also hints at the incessant badgering and verbal conflict that plays out in the media. While several tracks clearly take inspiration from his time living in Los Angeles, a thread of British cynicism continues to run through his lyrics, at times clearly taking digs at the state of global affairs over the last few years, just as in his previous two albums.

To end on a brief tangent, I've recently been opting to listen through albums over playlists, which often makes for a more structured and rounded out listening experience. *WHTTB?* is definitely one of those albums that will take you on the scenic route through the mind of the artist, so be sure to check it out!

McKenna and his band are on tour in the UK throughout late March and most of April, though tickets for many of his shows are already selling out, so if you're a fan of his music grab tickets while they're still available. Declan McKenna plays Alexandra Palace on 12th April 2024.



Cover of Declan McKenna's album, *What Happened to the Beach?*, released on 9th February, 2024.

BOOKS

An intricate introduction to reading Dostoevsky

Our Books editor elaborates on how best to enjoy one of the greatest masters of the page.

Books Editor
MOHAMMAD MAJLISI

Long-time readers of *Felix* may know my favourite author to be Virginia Woolf, because of the absolute beauty and expressionism that is imbued across all her works (evidence of this is in issue #1813). However, I have always maintained, above all else, that Fyodor Dostoevsky is the author you must read before you die.

Born in Russia in 1821, Dostoevsky lived through a time of great change and political turmoil, as liberal and Marxist ideals began to overtake Europe and Russia began its attempts to modernise, in competition with the industrialised West. Focused on the human condition, as well as delving deep to the realms of politics and philosophy, Dostoevsky is remarkable in how dazzlingly varied his oeuvre is, despite his studying as an engineer.

Trying to read Dostoevsky is an intimidating task as a lot of his novels are several hundred pages in length – many stand at approximately 600 pages. In addition, to truly get Dostoevsky, one must have a pretty good understanding of the febrile sociopolitical conditions within nineteenth-century Russia: the rise of radical anti-tsarists, the emancipation of the serf class into peasants, and a policy of Russification towards the country's Slavic neighbours.

This extends to key events in Dostoevsky's life, including his miraculous reprieve from being executed via shooting due to his involvement with the socialist Petrashevsky literary circle. Facing constant repression from the autocratic tsarist regime, several of Dostoevsky's journalistic endeavours were censored and cancelled, and a gambling addiction led to poverty trailing the latter section of his life.

Dostoevsky wrote in his native Russian, and to get

a solid grasp of his works, a decent translation is necessary. Most translations sold today are good, however for *Crime and Punishment*, I would recommend Oliver Ready's translation. It's written with the intention of providing all the characters with a unique narrative voice, including Russian grammar that dramatically alters how in particular the poor speak. It helps give the novel a much better voice than a formal, stiff translation would.



Dostoevsky is to be enjoyed in the snobbiest and most pretentious way possible, sort of like coffee.

I also recommend the Penguin Modern Classics (black with orange highlights) as they come with a timeline of Dostoevsky's life, key events, and footnotes that are perfect to catching the subtle humour that Fyodor sneaks in throughout his fiction. These aren't cheap on a student budget, but you can find decent second-hand copies for very cheap at charity shops.

The most important thing you'll need is peace and quiet. A Dostoevsky is not the type of book you take on your commute: you'll be likely to get lost in its pages and won't have a clue on what's going on. It might be a good idea to keep notes, or at least record which character is which, given the long Russian names, nicknames, and patronyms of each one.

Dostoevsky is to be enjoyed in the snobbiest and most



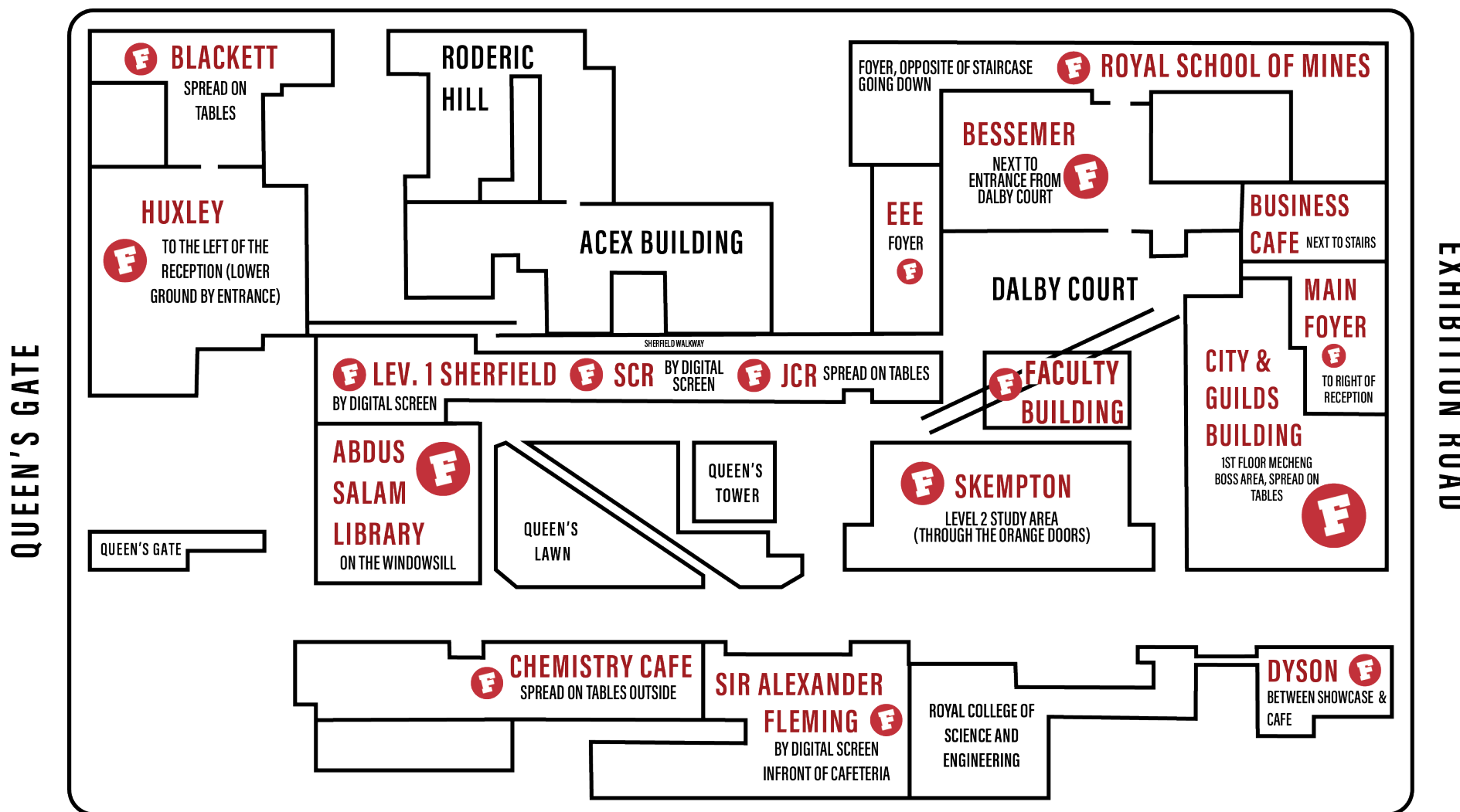
Facing constant repression from the autocratic tsarist regime, several of Dostoevsky's journalistic endeavours were censored and cancelled.

pretentious way possible, sort of like coffee. You have to invest your time and energy into it. However, the payoff that comes afterwards is immensely great. It changes the way you think, alters how you view the world, and makes you consider life in just a slightly different light.

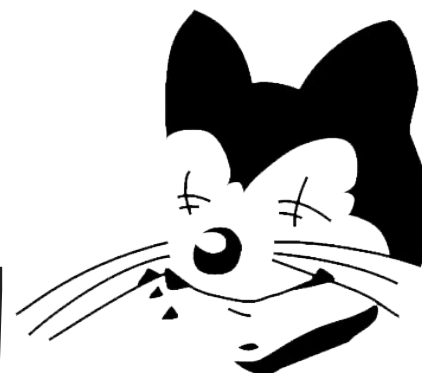
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BOOKS

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Trying to read Dostoevsky is an intimidating task as a lot of his novels are several hundred pages in length – many stand at approximately 600 pages. In addition, to truly get Dostoevsky, one must have a pretty good understanding of the febrile sociopolitical conditions within nineteenth-century Russia: the rise of radical anti-tsarists, the emancipation of the serf class into peasants, and a policy of Russification towards the country's Slavic neighbours.

This extends to key events in Dostoevsky's life, including his miraculous reprieve from being executed via shooting due to his involvement with the socialist Petrashevsky literary circle. Facing constant repression from the autocratic tsarist regime, several of Dostoevsky's journalistic endeavours were censored and cancelled, and a gambling addiction led to poverty trailing the latter section of his life.

Dostoevsky wrote in his native Russian, and to get

a solid grasp of his works, a decent translation is necessary. Most translations sold today are good, however for *Crime and Punishment*, I would recommend Oliver Ready's translation. It's written with the intention of providing all the characters with a unique narrative voice, including Russian grammar that dramatically alters how in particular the poor speak. It helps give the novel a much better voice than a formal, stiff translation would.



Dostoevsky is to be enjoyed in the snobbiest and most pretentious way possible, sort of like coffee.

I also recommend the Penguin Modern Classics (black with orange highlights) as they come with a timeline of Dostoevsky's life, key events, and footnotes that are perfect to catching the subtle humour that Fyodor sneaks in throughout his fiction. These aren't cheap on a student budget, but you can find decent second-hand copies for very cheap at charity shops.

The most important thing you'll need is peace and quiet. A Dostoevsky is not the type of book you take on your commute: you'll be likely to get lost in its pages and won't have a clue on what's going on. It might be a good idea to keep notes, or at least record which character is which, given the long Russian names, nicknames, and patronyms of each one.

Dostoevsky is to be enjoyed in the snobbiest and most



Facing constant repression from the autocratic tsarist regime, several of Dostoevsky's journalistic endeavours were censored and cancelled.

pretentious way possible, sort of like coffee. You have to invest your time and energy into it. However, the payoff that comes afterwards is immensely great. It changes the way you think, alters how you view the world, and makes you consider life in just a slightly different light.

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FOOD&TRAVEL

Morty & Bob's: a prime example of London's overpriced cuisine

Coal Drops Yard in King's Cross hosts many unique restaurants, among them the charming-yet-costly Morty & Bob's.

Food Editor

CHARLOTTE PROBSTEL

Grilled and cheese are the primary themes of this fine establishment in the heart of King's Cross. With a small menu of carefully-designed dishes, all either grilled or covered in cheese, or both – try their grilled cheese sandwich – the restaurant definitely upholds its authentic American/European cuisine. With a rich origin story about the founders' grandfathers – you can probably guess their names – and cosy interior design, the restaurant offers a wonderful night out with friends and family.



Butter beans on sourdough with cheddar cheese. Charlotte Probstel

The cosy atmosphere stems from the warm lighting and scattered tea candles that create an intimate but not-overly-romantic scene. The staff were kind and welcoming, and I particularly noticed that they refilled the water without being asked – a rare find in London restaurants. The other guests – families with young children, girl friends out for dinner, and your typical couples on date nights – all seemed content with their food and were all deep in conversation.

As a group of six students, I was keen to get every-

one's opinion on the food. The burger was deemed “delicious”, but “not worth the price” and it didn't fully satisfy my friends. My own vegetarian dish – the but-



Destroy H's favourite restaurant for their £15 beans on toast.

ter beans on toast – was saved by leeks and cheddar cheese, as the sourdough bread was slightly charred on one end. There aren't any vegan options on offer, besides the usual chips. The chicken schnitzel seemed to be the best-rated option from our group's discussion of the food

We all thanked our friend H for introducing us to this fine dining outlet. The staff, location, and food



Chicken schnitzel with a fried egg Charlotte

complemented the enjoyable conversation well, however we all agreed it isn't the best place for university students on a budget to enjoy a filling dinner. Nonetheless, I would still recommend Morty and Bob's for those who love a classic cheesy beans on toast.

Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon: best observed in London

London never ceases to provide the group you seek to belong to.

Travel Editor

CHARLOTTE PROBSTEL

Confirmation bias and selective attention combine to create the Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon; or as my mother calls it, the ‘pregnancy effect’. Pregnant women detect other pregnant women faster than the average person – because they subconsciously decide that pregnancy is the most important thing in their life. This is called selective attention. Now, these women may then think that the number of pregnancies has risen, even though there hasn't been a real change. This is called confirmation bias, and London – the international city where you can find almost any kind of person – is the best place to experience it.

I personally noticed the phenomenon as I was running long-distance last weekend. I stumbled across at least six different running groups during my usual Saturday morning run. After the sixth group I stopped counting. I saw them everywhere: Westminster, Hyde Park, Regent's Park, and Chelsea. Similar to running into a flock of pigeons, chaos would ensue each time I noticed the approaching legion of Nike wearing soldiers.

That was not the only time this has happened; last Sunday I met up with a friend to take a few photos around London. The abundance of tourists and locals with all their different professional cameras struck me. It was as if everyone that weekend had decided to go out to the Thames to take pictures – but that is what confirmation bias is. I told my friend about my observation and he said “I noticed that when I was looking for flats. I started seeing letting signs everywhere.”

I now aim to notice more things about London – without the bias of course, this is a STEM university after all.

PHOTOGRAPHY

What to live for

Predecessors: loss, responsibility, and what it means to be alive.



Predecessors Natalia Kubica

Head Photographer ROLANDO CHARLES

Loss is that moment in life when we experience what it means to exist, to be alive. As cliché as it sounds, it is only in the absence of something that we understand the meaning of its presence. 'Only miss the sun when it starts to snow...', as the song goes. I believe it is at those very moments when we ask ourselves the age-old questions: 'what to live for?', or, 'why get up in the morning at all?'. Finding an answer to these questions means escaping a nihilistic, narrow view of life and accepting that although no answer is certain, and few are given, we must create the rest.

How can we ask ourselves such profound questions through photography? One possible answer is what Natalia encapsulates in this week's winning photo:

we simply don't ask ourselves. We instead get our subject to pose the question. By depicting the process of questioning and not showing us a definite answer, I think Natalia is saying that not even the all-seeing photographer can answer such existential questions, and we must find solace despite this unanswerable dilemma.

The harsh daylight in *Predecessors* almost completely removes shadows from the environment, and I commend Natalia for shooting in what is typically a difficult lighting situation. The only visible shadow – the soldier's – is sharp and distinct, as are the other shapes in this composition. Perhaps I was initially attracted to this picture because of the contrast between the vagueness, and dare I say futility, of this week's theme and the perfectly defined contours and colours of the photo. There is no hidden subject, haze, fog, or indecisiveness in the photo, and yet the question remains unanswered.

I always find it an interesting exercise to imagine oneself as the subject of a photo – in this case, the mourning soldier. For him, walking has a different meaning than usual, less about moving from one place to another and more about reliving certain moments and desperately trying to answer the question of 'what to live for?'. Passing by so many other lost lives, the soldier might start to think the question has been posed incorrectly. It's not 'what should I live for?', it's 'what do I live for?', as we turn to others for an answer. We are not alone in this endeavour, lest we forget that others have also lived and all our lives are profoundly intertwined in such a way that maybe the question changes once again, and the soldier is now asking 'who to live for?'

As I finish writing this piece I realise that maybe Natalia did answer this question, in a sort of roundabout, footnote-like way. The title of the photo is

Predecessors, which is a term that evokes in me a sense of duty and responsibility. It makes me think that, although our ancestors couldn't have answered the question 'who to live for?', we can now do so for them: 'for me'. As I put the living's ego above all else, I suggest that we are the reasons the people before us have lived and that we should try more to give meaning to their lives than our own. In the same way, many years from now, our descendants might also give us meaning.

Scan the QR code to submit for the next theme '**Sonder**':





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SOCIETIES

Bleeding Money? Submit your annual budgets!

Societies Editor

CHARLOTTE PROBSTEL

The Student Union has £425,000 to distribute between all 371 societies, six Management Groups (MGs) and five Constituent Unions (CUs). If we lived in an equal society, that would round down to £1,100 per entity, however, reality tells us something else. Societies without a membership fee of at least £3 are ineligible for grant money – meaning they cannot receive any income from the £425k pot, regardless of the size of their membership – or so our source tells us.

Large sports and cultural societies can request more money in their annual budgets, and, if done correctly, they will be granted a bigger chunk of the pot, leaving smaller societies to depend on their self-generated income (SGI). Grant requests can be between £3 and two times the membership fee, “to ensure that no CSP is requesting an unreasonable level of grant, disadvantaging other CSPs.” states Deputy President (Clubs & Societies) Christian Cooper.

Societies should aim to break even, otherwise the surplus of that grant money is retracted by the Union at the end of the school year – however, non-grant surpluses do transfer to the following year. This is where SGI is vital for societies’ growth. The Union suggests aiming for a 10% surplus or deficit. This is to “ensure that no CSP profits from members in the long-run.”

An incorrect budget can be costly. A rejected budget can leave your society penniless the following year. But do not worry, any mistakes should be caught by your MG, which will email your societies representatives to make minor changes if necessary, so look out for those emails.



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Felix, how do I get my event advertised?*

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* This conversation absolutely happened

** Advertisements are charged, see prices on Page 2



so many books that want to be read

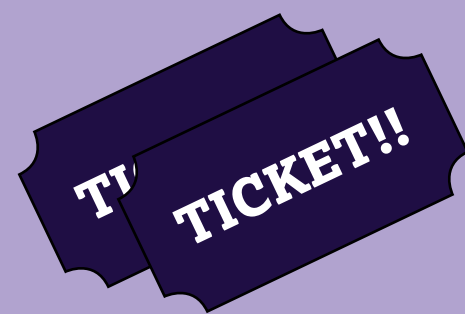
DROP OFF YOUR BOOKS, PICK UP A NEW ONE



How to publicise your society's events with Felix!

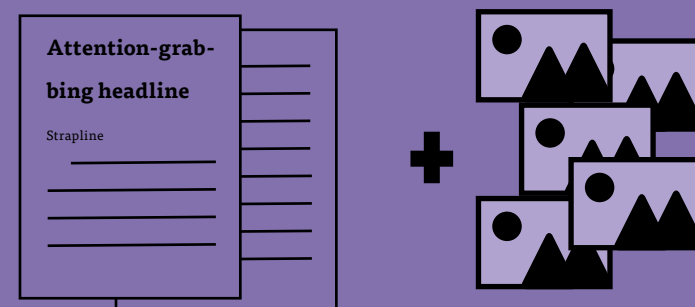
1 Host your event

Dance night, sports match, trip, competition, sale, presentation, fire-side talk, special guest lecture, the list goes on!



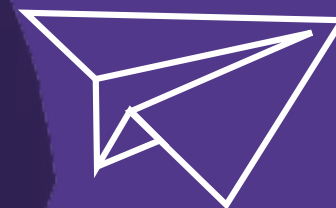
2 Write about it

or ask the *Felix Societies* team to attend and cover the event. Submissions should be roughly 400-600 words with pictures.



3 Send it to *Felix*!

at felix@imperial.ac.uk



4 Published!

Issues come out every Friday. The deadline for submissions is every Sunday night.



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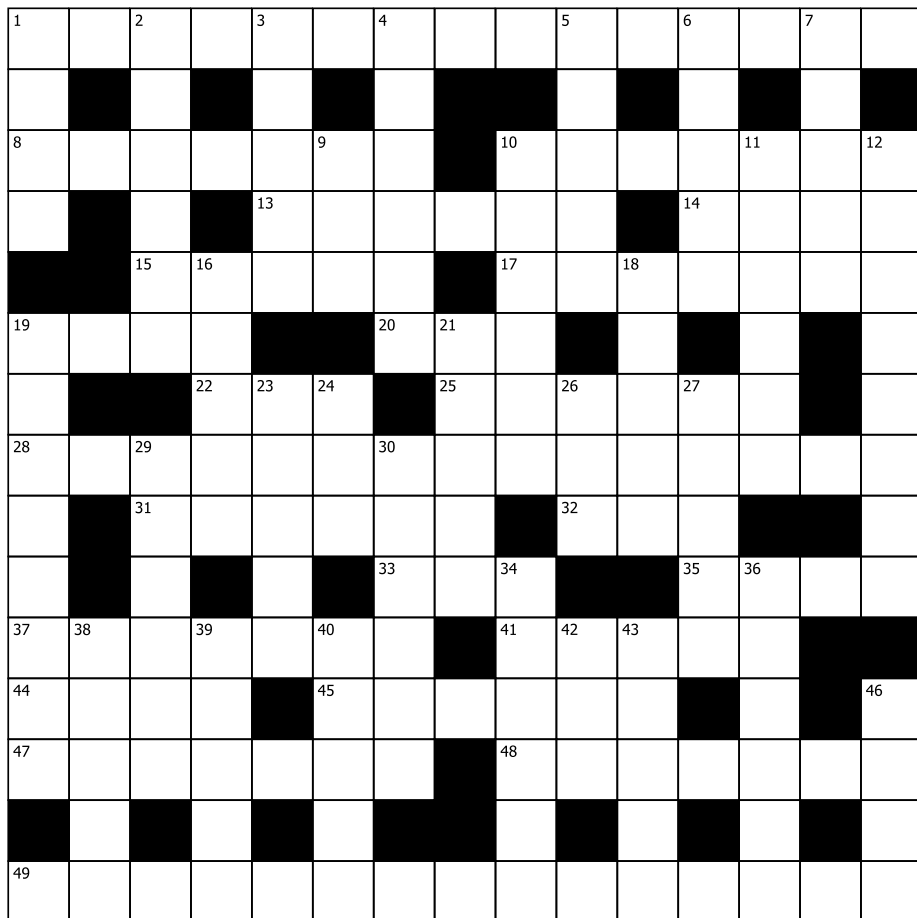


PUZZLES

Puzzles Editor
STANLEY SCOTT

CROSSWORD

Repetitive Refrains (3 pts.)



Across

- 1. **Demanding song!** [5 5]
- 8. Atmospheric light displays. [7]
- 10. Savanna tours. [7]
- 13. Decorated with jewels, e.g. [6]
- 14. There might be a separate one for drinks. [4]
- 15. Lavatory essential. [1-4]
- 17. _____ 87, a galaxy whose central black hole was recently imaged. [7]
- 19. "Could take it or leave it." [2-2]
- 20. Cleopatra's bane. [3]
- 22. Short expression of being dumbfounded. [3]
- 25. Blue on universal indicator. [6]
- 28. **Capital song!** [5 5]
- 31. Washed-out 33-across. [6]
- 32. Superlative suffix. [3]
- 33. Stain. [3]
- 35. Unscrupulous lawyer from *Breaking Bad*. [4]
- 37. Funny turn, e.g. [7]
- 41. Man of the cloth. [5]
- 44. Unhealthy lung sign picked up by stethoscope. [4]

45. Dampen. [6]

47. In the Americas, e.g. [7]

48. Angle unit. [7]

49. **Wedding song!** [1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2]

Down

1. Chomp. [4]

2. Former emperor Aurelius. [6]

3. Spooky. [5]

4. Staunton of *Harry Potter* fame.

[6]

5. A crook might do this with their taxes. [5]

6. Muslim spiritual figureheads.

[5]

7. American state famous for its lobster. [5]

9. Politician Widdecombe who danced with Anton Du Beke on *Strictly Come Dancing*. [3]

10. Elementary. [6]

11. Make less conspicuous. [6]

12. Examination. [8]

16. Celtic surname. [5]

18. Verb in many a tabloid

headline describing criticism [5].

19. Mexican hat. [8]

21. Granular. [5]

23. Renewable energy source, abbr. [5]

24. *The Big Bang Theory* character Farah Fowler. [3]

26. Name homophonic to χ's pronunciation in English. [3]

27. Many, colloquially. [5]

29. Having come of age. [6]

30. Fluid build-up linked to disease. [6]

34. Very. [4 2]

36. Prada competitor. [6]

38. "London streets are _____ with gold." [5]

39. Eastern caravansary. [5]

40. Argentinian footballer Maradona. [5]

42. Girl's name, or previous ownership contraction. [3]

43. Yielded. [5]

46. City housing the Munch Museum. [4]

Cryptic across

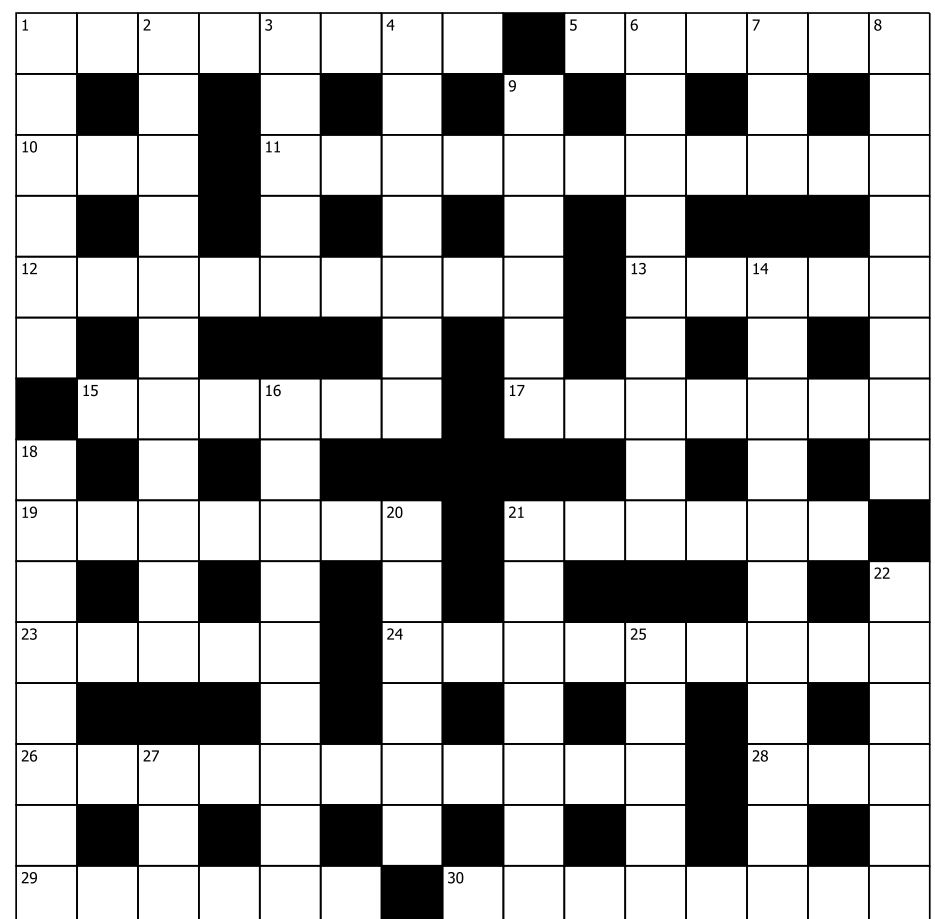
- 1. Grasp about nimbly at the centre for this sport! [8]
- 5. Leave poorly opened curtains. [6]
- 10. Exercise ambassador. [3]
- 11. Weakened in violent battle, I died. [11]
- 12. Her circle of friends is small! [4 5]
- 13. Blimey, that soldier's a cur! [5]
- 15. Prejudice surrounding original fuel source. [6]
- 17. A little whiff of Spain in the cakes. [7]
- 19. Fought the globe, and ended up paying the ultimate price? [7]
- 21. The BBC got irritated with a pair of Yanks, so bid them adieu. [3-3]
- 23. Flanked by roots all around. [5]
- 24. It's foolish to be wearing no underwear in between all the others! [9]
- 26. The drinks, imbued with power, were chosen beforehand. [11]
- 28. She's from Bengaluru. [3]
- 29. Choosing a title for an unsophisticated dynasty. [6]
- 30. Nobleman agrees to disrupt the young subculture. [8]

Cryptic down

- 1. Religious figure in church is right inside the west transept. [6]
- 2. Jazz players unsophisticatedly simp over nobleman. [11]
- 3. I heard it's the bed you wet! [5]
- 4. Cake mix containers with little remnants. [7]
- 6. Strangely, a three-times eaten, mediocre vegetable. [9]
- 7. The bird is inside, isn't it? [3]
- 8. Does some bad publication affect the most shady? [8]
- 9. Dribbles around 3 o'clock when he slumbers. [6]
- 14. Town competition for ball-sport. [5 6]
- 16. Messenger has mouth wet around outer edge and bottom of chin. [2-7]
- 18. What fastens a policeman's badge? [5 3]
- 20. Informed head of death or birth on the bed. [6]
- 21. Violent noise around the street caused by gun. [7]
- 22. By the way, charity is something found in the bible. [6]
- 25. Help an upcoming woman. [5]
- 27. Rotten half of a lemon tree. [3]

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

(5 pts.)



SUDOKU

7	9			5				
		8					2	
3	1			8	9		5	
				2	1	8		
	3					2	1	
1	2		6	9				
	4		8	1	6	5	3	
2			7	3				4

				4	1	3		9
		5	3				7	
4	3				9	2		
							2	
		8			3		9	
	5	4			6		8	
	7			3			1	
8		9						2
	6		8		2	9		

1			3	4		5		
	3					7	4	
	4		5			3	6	
6				5				
		9	8					4
							1	
	6						2	
						4		5
	9			2		8	3	

	2	5	7	6	9			1
	3				5	9	7	
		7				2	6	
7		4	3		6		8	
3	1			7	8	4	5	
2	5	8	9			7	3	
	6			9			2	
								1

				7			8	2
	8				2	9		
2			8					
								5
6	2	1		5	8		3	
5	9						1	8
		4	3	2	1			
							1	5
				9		8		

	4						6	
		8		1		5		2
							5	
5			6	8	9	4		3
4			1					9
	6	5						4
				6		2		
		4						8

Medium (1 pt. each)

Hard (2 pts. each)

Extra hard (3 pts. each)

GROUPING GRIDS

post	nail	thumb	snuff
proxy	IP	Crimean	palm
knuckle	domain	server	user
lunch	squeeze	flame	finger

How-to:

For fans of *Only Connect*! The sixteen clues in each of these puzzles can be placed into four groups of four, each with a connecting feature. To solve the puzzle, write these groups and their connections below! An example can be seen in last week's solutions.

snow	fire	foot	arm
dole	idiom	give	wee
hair	donate	toga	bequeath
hand	twix	balm	slime

Medium (3 pts.)

Connections

1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

Hard (4 pts.)

Connections

1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				



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