

IMPERIAL COLLEGE UNION
Elections Report – Evidence and Reasoning
A report by the Executive Committee

Mass Emailing

The senders stated that they had emailed groups of their friends from external accounts using their personal contacts lists. They provided the Returning Officer with printouts of their contacts lists and stated that the emails had not been saved in their sent items and the emails were BCC'd to the recipients. Suggestions had also been made (denied by all the candidates interviewed, as well as by the senders) that a club mailing list had been used for the purposes of this email.

ICT informed us that:

- 21 emails had been sent under the same subject line (including RE: and FW: etc) from various external accounts.
- 343 imperial addresses had received one of those emails.
- 15 had been sent to more than 10 people
- Within these 15 the imperial addresses in any given email all began with a single letter or with two consecutive letters.
- There appeared to be no overlap between any of the recipients of these (15) emails.
- The 15 emails *must* have been received by between 289 and 337 recipients (i.e. max/min since the 6 'small' emails can have had between 6 and 54 recipients collectively)

Given that the recipients' addresses were alphabetically ordered and that no person appeared to have received an email twice this suggested that a list of some description had been used to send the emails and further, that that list had been sectioned with numerous people co-operating in sending those sections. The nature and origin of this list had not been ascertained and could conceivably have been a list composed of the all the senders' friends with the work of emailing being shared between those involved. However this had been denied by the known senders who had categorically stated that they [individually] had emailed only people personally known to themselves and whose addresses were already in their contacts lists. It was also felt that the 15 emails would have been received by nearer the upper limit (337) rather than the lower (289) as some of the other 6 emails would account for the forwarding of the complaints received/asking for advice etc.

- Sender 1 is known to have sent an email covering the range N-P. This reached 38 IC addresses in this range.
- Sender 2 is known to have sent two emails, one covering the letter I and another that included imperial addresses beginning with K.
- Analysis of Sender 1's contacts list shows 39 IC addresses in the range N-P, with 26 outside this range.
- This email was also known to have reached the address 'president@imperial.ac.uk' although this address was not in the contact list.
- Sender 2's contact list had 16 imperial addresses for the letter I, 15 Js and 18 Ks, while the remainder of the alphabet accounted for 36 other imperial addresses.
- There was significant overlap between the senders' contacts lists.

It is highly improbable that these concentrations could be a 'natural' occurrence and as such was evidence that names had been specifically added to the contacts list for the purpose of (or as a result of) sending these emails.

The addresses in the contacts list were correlated against the population of the club mailing list that was suspected of having been used. The mailing list had 40 IC email addresses in the range N-P, of which one was president@ic.ac.uk

Of the remaining 39 addresses 37 were common to both lists. Two of the addresses in the contact list were 'dead', while three addresses were unique to the mailman list. More than two weeks had elapsed between the sending of the emails and this interrogation of the mailing list. Given that one address was for a fresher and a second for a first year postgraduate, the committee believed that it would not be unreasonable to infer that these addresses may have been added to the mailman list *after* the email in question had been sent. A random comparison with other parts of the list showed no such correlation, e.g. 'S' had 3 entries in the sender's contact list and there were ~100 in the mailman list.

A similar comparison was done with sender 2's contact list and the mailman list for the letters I, J, K. There were 16 imperial addresses in the contact list beginning with the letter I and 15 in the mailman list, of which one did not appear in the contact list. For J there were 15 contacts, 14 of which appeared in the list with no addresses unique to the mailman list, while K had 18 appearing in each list, of which 17 were common to both. Again the rest of the alphabet failed to correlate in any such significant way.

At the time of the investigation there were 360 current imperial addresses belonging to students on the society's mailing list. Allowing for some addresses to have been added after the emails were sent it was felt that this was remarkably close to the number of addresses that received the 15 emails that had been identified (~335), especially considering that it was unlikely the senders sent the emails to themselves and most of the candidates deny receiving one.

Consequently it is believed that the addresses in the mailman list have been copied and added to these contact lists either prior to, or as a consequence of, sending the emails.

Emails and Candidates' Statements

Note In all the emails and statements below names of people not running in the elections have been blocked out. Some of the statements have extraneous paragraphs which have also been removed and this is marked by [...]

In coming to a decision as to who was aware of, or was required to be responsible for, the sending of the emails the following information was available to the executive: written statements from the candidates, verbal statements and answers to questions and lists of seconders and proposers for the elections.

Under the election rules candidates are responsible for all publicity in their names. The following emails were sent out to various people, although everyone was BCC'd. The first email was forwarded by sender 1, but was written and signed by a third person (signatory to the email). It was these emails that were complained about and were subsequently investigated, as outlined above.

Text is below;

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 October 2005 16:52
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Vote in the Imperial College Union elections

[REDACTED]

Please vote in for the elections taking place. Remember that the order take you place beside each name will be critical to who is actually selected. Below are the list of 12 you are advised to vote for. The order in which you do it is up to you but some points you may want to consider is:

Vote 1, 2, 3 ...12

where 1 is person you think will be most influential and 12 is the least influential.

Position: ICU Council - Ordinary Members Ahmad MOOLLA Farhan KHADAM Habib ABDUR-RAHMAN
Haji HASSAM Kamaludin DINGLE Mohammed BUTT Mohammed MARIKAR Mustaffa JUNAID Rayhan AHMED
Sarah JUNAID Shazad KHALID Tanvirul ALAM

Position: ICU Equal Opportunties Officer Kareem OSMAN

Vote using the following link www.union.ic.ac.uk/vote and vote by Monday 24th 23:59.

[REDACTED] (President ICU [REDACTED] Society - in a personal capacity)

The sender and the signatory seconded these candidates, and the signatory was Tanvirul Alam's Proposer.

The second email was sent (and signed) by sender 2.

[REDACTED],
Please vote in for the elections taking place.
Remember that the order take
you place beside each name will be critical to who is
actually selected.
Below are the list of 12 you are advised to vote for.
The order in which you
do it is up to you but some points you may want to
consider is:

Vote 1, 2, 3 ...12

where 1 is person you think will be most influential
and 12 is the least
influential.

Position: ICU Council - Ordinary Members List (in no
particular order)

Ahmad MOOLLA
Farhan KHADAM
Habib ABDUR-RAHMAN
Haji HASSAM
Kamaludin DINGLE
Mohammed BUTT
Mohammed MARIKAR
Mustaffa JUNAID
Rayhan AHMED
Sarah JUNAID
Shazad KHALID
Tanvirul ALAM
Omar HASHMI

Position: ICU Equal Opportunties Officer
Kareem OSMAN

Vote using the following link www.union.ic.ac.uk/vote
and vote by Monday
24th 23:59.

[REDACTED]
(Vice-President ICU [REDACTED] Society - in a personal capacity)

This person seconded all of these people except for Ahmad Moola and Kamaludin Dingle.

The statements made by the candidates to the Executive Committee are below.

Sagir Hassam:

Dear Sameena and Dave,

I personally think that this had blown out of proportion, although it a serious problem, to me it looks like more of a case of mistaken identity instead if a mass conspiracy or systematic breaking of rules.

I stood for elections and told all of my friends and asked them to spread the word and vote me by telling their friends and so on; as anyone would do. Of these friends included was [REDACTED] (my buddy in my fresher's year), [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] although I may not have asked them directly to campaign for me, the fact they did would please me. I have worked with them before and their character's are all exemplary and they are not "rule-breakers". If however, they did in error email the wrong people its seriously something taken way out of proportion, I have done it all the time, and my email program adds everyone who emails me to my address book, and its not on purpose I have emailed lecturer's party invitations!

[...]

Sagir Hassam

Tanvirul Alam:

I understand that the Elections Officer has received two complaints with regards to the campaigning for the Union Council Ordinary Member election, and the Returning officer is suspecting three individuals to be in breach of the election rules and regulations.

The breach of rules mentioned (as far as I remember) in the last meeting are:

- 1) Spamming students (people other than their friends) to vote for selected candidates; and
- 2) Using certain student society mailing list.

I believe that the returning officer is referring to the section in the candidates' pack that states,

- No use of email lists (either college or union) or any mass emailing of any form.

However, the returning officer failed to show any solid evidence whatsoever that those individuals had actually sent any e-mails to anyone that they do not know.

In the last meeting, I had been informed by the returning officer that someone had actually indicated that there is only ONE way they (i.e. ██████████) could have got their (the complainers) e-mail addresses, which is from the ██████████ Society mailing list.

I find it hard to believe that the complainers are on the ██████████ Society mailing list and do not know ██████████ ██████████ are; even though they (the complainers) have been and still are receiving regular e-mails from the ██████████ Society with the officers' name clearly stated at those e-mails.

I have spoken to the ██████████ on this matter. They have told me that they used their yahoo account address book to e-mail that they know. They said that they have not used the ██████████ Society mailing list.

I am certain that they have not used the ██████████ Society mailing list because at least two of my e-mail addresses (one IC one Hotmail) are registered with the mailing list and I have not received any e-mails in any of my e-mail account (i.e. IC and Hotmail) from these individuals; not even the one that is allegedly sent using the ██████████ Society mailing list.

I do not see any reason why any of these individuals (i.e. ██████████) and I should be penalised based on some unfounded complaints. I do not think that the Returning Officer have a case until I am presented with clear evidence that these individuals had sent e-mails to unknown to people and the ██████████ Society mailing list had been used.

Tanvirul Alam

When asked by the Executive Committee whether he had asked the senders to campaign for him Tanvirul said that: [he] "had assumed that they would as they are friends." As noted above, the signatory to the first email was also his proposer.

Mustaffa Junaid:

Dear Sameena,

My apologies for the very late reply. I am one of the candidates running for a position on the union council. With respect to the issue of an unfair election, i was one of the candidates on the email in question. Although i have little first-hand information on this subject i will clarify some points. Those who sent the emails were friends of mine and, as such, were campaigning on my behalf to get me elected. As i have read in your email there were 2 complaints about these emails. I am well aware of the rules and i assure you that i stuck them. Not me or, and i am sure, those in question had any intention of sending spam emails. My view on this was that the email was sent to these people by an honest mistake. If the union has a suspicion of the [REDACTED] using its mailing list to directly send any emails, i for one have not seen any evidence for this. As a member of the [REDACTED] mailing list i can honestly say i did not receive the email, which proves that there was no mass mailing.

[...]

Kind Regards,

Mustaffa Junaid