History Dialogue Forum Contributions

26 January 2022

134 Staff members (90 support staff and 44 academics) and 21 students (2 UG and 19 PG) signed up to attend the forum.

The forum discussion focused around four key sections, based on the feedback received so far. These were:

- 1. Feedback on the overall process
- 2. Thoughts on the way we currently recognise figures at Imperial, including the History Group Report's recommendations to rename certain buildings
- 3. New suggestions and ideas from our community
- 4. Future management

Speakers are highlighted in blue, and their verbal comments have been noted. Other written comments were submitted in advance or during the meeting.

1.	Overall process	
Positive		I think it was a good idea to do the report. I thought the positive stories that came out of the research were constructive. I appreciate the work that went into this report as I know it can't have been comfortable (to grow is not meant to be comfortable and requires difficult conversations and reckonings). It will be interesting to hear about next steps and how some of the recommendations are going to be taken forward. I am happy college is doing this, it is good to reflect back at our history. Am impressed with the integrity of the report to acknowledge the past and am interested to see how it's findings will prompt change. The history group's report seems to me to be an informed and balanced response to a difficult debate, and I think its recommendations are reasonable and proportionate. While I understand that some others may disagree, I think the College should hold firm against ridiculous accusations that this amounts to
Approach and historians		"cancel culture", "rewriting history" or similar. Speaker: I'm on the side of retain and explain. Provost said purpose is to listen to each others views, I agree with this. So I am sorry it's the case that we haven't heard each other's views. 208 email inputs – these include people who can't or prefer not to attend discussions. These discussions are extremely important and demand a considered approach, not soundbites. These emails should be shared and these views must be heard. One of them is from – extremely thoughtful and informative. They are central to the whole process. Provost initially agreed to share the email input but now said cannot due to confidentiality. Please email all the contributors and ask if they're prepared to share their contributions. Vital that this process is seen to be transparent otherwise you won't take the community with you.

	A comment, I like suggestion about the written submissions. I just don't have a clear picture of the 'spread' of views yet. There is an intellectual history that has not yet surfaced. SUGGESTION: The submissions could be the basis of a symposium, if we contact the authors I do not wish to comment on the specific recommendations made in the report, but rather raise a point of method and approach to the question. I was surprised to see that a so-called "History group" did not have among its members a single professional historian. I think this was a mistake: comparing the History Group report with the Yale report (2016, chaired by a historian) or
	the Caltech report (2020, with a professor of history among its members) on similar issues immediately reveals a vastly different approach. I do not wish to criticise the work of the colleagues on the History Group, who I am sure laboured with the best of intentions and have been able to count on the input of qualified external advisors, as some of the appendices demonstrate. However, just as one wouldn't want to commission an Assyriologist to design a bridge, I don't think an engineer, scientist or medic ought to be expected to master the finer points of historical scholarship, nor to be conversant with the nuanced approaches taken in the humanities when evaluating multi-faceted issues such as the ones the History Group grappled with.
	Imperial would be well served, in my opinion, by commissioning a new report to an external group of independent professional historians, tasked to delineate the general principles by which to judge the issues. Without the guiding light of higher level principles, and the insight that the humanities can bring to these thorny questions, a list of bullet point recommendations risks to reduce complex issues to over-simplified binary decisions.
Further consultation	From the summary of contributions received following publication of the report it is clear there is no consensus on some of the specific recommendations. I therefore suggest that next steps could include a wider, more comprehensive and inclusive process of looking at the College's history and the legacies of its founders and major donors in the context of today's values and our aspirations to provide a supportive and welcoming environment to students and staff from all backgrounds. UCL underwent a similar process a couple of years ago and it may be instructive to talk with them and learn from their experience.
	Speaker: I am concerned about the representation on the History Group. Particularly absent are the very groups of people who have sparked the BLM question, particularly the afro Caribbean community. I think their contributions are the most relevant to the ongoing question. Better representation needed otherwise things will be skewed.
	Speaker: Just to reiterate, the History Group was diverse, did include a number of people from our Black community. Those views and voices very much informed conversation. Not many views here today from that community. Must remember that the voices of that community are absent from the historical record. The absence of those voices here today is perhaps an indication of the continuing difficulties minorities have in feeling free to express themselves.

Speaker: This topic can be quite heavy, and after the past nearly two years of heavy topics I think some needed more time to process and respond to the requests for participation last year. Some would want to contribute, but didn't know it was happening last year or have a clash with the date/time of the forum and may be looking for additional opportunities to contribute in 2022. People need to remember that there are a lot of people who are part our community who aren't who we might traditionally think of, and were there in the past as well. 2. Current Recognition Speaker: Make the case for why we should celebrate Huxley – with a close and critical reading of history we could actually uphold Huxley as a role model and should be someone that we can all be proud of. Founder member of the College and had very progressive ideas for his time, and his scientific legacy. To mention a few contributions, "Darwins Bulldog" - defended first theory of evolution despite open hostility of Anglican church and Victorian society. Hugely impressive comparative anatomy studies – links between birds and dinosaurs, humans descended from apes. People claim he is a racist, history group cite that essay. Irony is that article was a polemic for the abolition of slavery, and he also upheld women's rights in that essay. I would welcome a series of forums where we could discuss the 208 responses to the History Group report. These contributions should be made public. Suggest a 2025 bicentenary celebration of Huxley on a bigger scale to previous – we are greatly indebted to him. He dwarfs the achievements of many fine biologists and scientists who are alive today. I don't think believe his legacy should invoke any sense of hurt or isolation, with discussion his legacy would be beneficial to the College. If the College Huxley implements recommendations that effectively "cancels" TH Huxley, the College may well find that in future it would also need to cancel Charles Darwin (as he too held similar, if not worse, views on race in his day). Such a development would not only deeply discredit Imperial College's international reputation as a university, but it would also make it an international laughingstock. The one diverse aspect that isn't present on history group is a diversity of views. A danger that the College leadership assuming they are speaking on behalf of offended students. Press Provost to release emails to College community. Thank you for the opportunity of participating to this dialogue. For the sake of brevity, I will focus on three broad arguments that I believe are poignant for this discussion. People should be judged according to the standard of their time: I believe that this principle is paramount in considering figures such as Huxley. I also believe that the counter argument that some people had more

the above principle is "standard".

progressive ideas represents a misguided reply, as the important bit of

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	 Names should be representative of people that have made astounding scientific contributions and are related to Imperial College: this is my personal belief and once again Huxley is a perfect case. Imperial College is not renowned for its ethos, but for its scientific prowess. I believe that names should represent that, not ethos (which can rapidly change) or wealthy donors. All types of discomfort should be acknowledged: I understand that some people may feel a sense of discomfort in relation to statements made by figures such as Huxley. At the same time, I also believe that other people would feel a sense of discomfort in seeing the achievements of people like Huxley being erased, and in feeling that part of Imperial College's heritage is being cancelled. I believe that both these feelings should be properly acknowledged in the current debate. I will refrain from commenting issues such as changing Imperial College's name or "decolonizing" Imperial College's curricula as they were not part of the suggestions proposed by the History Group. I am strongly against changing the name of the Huxley building. Huxley was an inspirational figure for me. I think it will be inappropriate to rename the Huxley building as this will constitute an injustice to this remarkable man and his contributions to science, society and more specifically to Imperial College. I disagree with the idea of naming the building as 'Huxley-Salam' as this muddles up names, issues, and recognitions. Also not keen on the idea of making a museum within Imperial, but I strongly support keeping the dialogue open, with smaller spaces of display in the library or elsewhere in public spaces, common rooms etc., wherever appropriate, and magazines and invited lectures, where the history of Imperial is presented, discussed and debated.
	Finally, I think it is critical for all to know and preserve history so that it can be used as a point of reference for where we have started, where we are now and where we need to go.
	Speaker: Historical accuracy – concerned that there are many views being given about Huxley etc, but very little evidence for them. Claims that people felt unwelcome/marginalised etc – the point is here that whatever some people feel, the history is just wrong. Huxley had no links to Eugenics, and in writings criticised these ideas. If anything, he's an anti-eugenicist. We seem to have forgotten this. He was an ardent abolitionist and fought racism. He recounted his views on hierarchy of races in later life. If anything, we should celebrate him as a champion of diversity. He is someone of whom we should be very proud. I would hope some accommodation with the Huxley Building could be reached;
	maybe with a plaque containing a link to a full discussion of Huxley's contributions to Science and a repudiation of those of his views which we no longer accept.

	Speaker: When the history group report came out I was looking forward to it – a good opportunity to broaden discussions. But when I read it, I realised we're not there yet – this is a very preliminary investigation with no evidence. I don't think the History Group meant that to be the final stage and I was relieved to read that. I know a different Huxley and Haldane. Haldane for example was one of a small number campaigning against eugenics. He said his assumptions are false. Unesco statement 1951 on racial/genetic differences – co signed – which says racial differences are of little significance. We should be proud of working in a university that has Haldane's legacy. History, however unpalatable, cannot be rewritten! I do not think that Imperial names and statues etc are offensive. It would be much better to focus on the
	future and minimize present and future discrimination
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	I support keeping names and statues in situ but with an explanation but reviewing the wider College environment regularly to 'freshen' things up from our archives.
Against renaming	This attempt to revise (sanitise) our University's history seems analogous to Winston Smith in the novel 1984. His job is to overwrite the 'truth', to replace the history of what has happened with a continually revised version. Winston enjoys his work and is good at it, yet at the same time he worries about the rewriting of history. A line in the novel describes how " every picture has been repainted, every statue and street building has been renamed", and Winston wants to know 'what really happened'.
Aga	It seems to me that, perhaps, we owe future students the politeness of being able to make up their own minds about the University's long history, rather than arrogantly deciding what we think they might be allowed to know.
	I'm actually appalled that this historic, respected university is entertaining cancel culture like this. If we were to take seriously the views of some of these people there would need to be a mass removal of all statues across London and the world.
	Ghandi's racist views on black people surely then earned him his statue removal. Which is madness by the way because the good that he did far outweighs the outdated views that were common in that era. I can name many heroes of humanity that did questionable things in their life(especially early on) but then contributed to the development of humanity. A part of being human is to evolve, change your opinions and learn from history(like Ghandi). What this History Dialogue is doing is trying to sanitise the
	past to make an ungrateful, spiteful generation feel better about themselves.
	This should not be entertained, no buildings or busts should be removed or renamed.

Retain and explain works for me too. I think there is a good balance about not throwing things away for the sake of viewing through today's lens. That said we are quite keen to gently drop the almoth wright name for his fairly radically sexist views. One revelation that I have come to lately is that history isn't dissimilar to science – open to interpretation, requires exploration of evidence to support hypotheses. I like the idea of team science/ naming but agree complicated I am mostly happy to defer to other people on this issue, but I feel a lot of the push-back response is based on the following thinking. Fundamentally, there's no actual harm in a building or lecture theatre not being named for a particular scientist; most of these buildings could have a whole host of names. However, many staff probably feel concerned that actively removing names is an act of criticism/censure of individuals, and we (as scientists who are imperfect humans and products of our time, but aspire to doing great things) imagine the same thing happening to our "legacy". I think it's that feeling of (literal) sympathy that gets people so worked up. I feel that was about Haldane. In the history report, he is simply mentioned as "the first to discuss human cloning and its implications in eugenics". Not only is that a massive undersell of his scientific contribution, but it really isn't a balanced view of him as a human being. He was also a strident socialist/Marxist and humanist who actually renounced his British citizenship, partly on the Haldane grounds of objecting to Imperialism. One of his reasons for living in India instead was stated as: "I also happen to be proud of being a citizen of India, which is a lot more diverse than Europe, let alone the U.S.A, the U.S.S.R or China, and thus a better model for a possible world organisation." When it comes to cloning and eugenics, he even said "On the general principle that men will make all possible mistakes before choosing the right path, we shall no doubt clone the wrong people [like Hitler]" and "Assuming that cloning is possible, I expect that most clones would be made from people aged at least fifty, except for athletes and dancers, who would be cloned younger. They would be made from people who were held to have excelled in a socially acceptable accomplishment.". In general, Haldane seems to have been exploring what is possible/might happen, and simultaneously bringing up the attendant ethical quandaries. Now I don't share Haldane's political views, but aside from being a towering intellect I would say that he was wrestling with important moral questions of human existence, and based on my limited reading it would seam that, on balance, he was actually a "good" person on social and racial issues. I must confess that I fear for my own legacy if such a person is deemed undeserving! One of our College values is integrity, with listed positive behaviours including "I enamin. speak up when I observe that something isn't right" and "I admit my mistakes and take action to resolve them". The College has taken money from, and named buildings / chairs after, some extremely unpleasant people in the past - I

	think we should face up to that and take the steps recommended by the History
	Group to, at a minimum, provide context, or, where appropriate, rename.
	I'm supportive of the history report and its recommendations. The report
	highlights the College's historical context in light of today's concerns around
	gender equality, diversity, racial justice, memorial work, and inclusion in general.
	We are fighting for a fair society and it starts with how we face our past, process
	our memorial work and choose representations. Who we decide to distinguish
	as role models and heroes of various times in the past is fundamental in this
	approach because Imperial is an education institution training the leaders of the
	future.
	We are living in different times with a diverse Imperial staff and student
	community within a diverse population. The values by which Imperial is judged
	are different from even 10-20 years ago. What was acceptable then may not be
	now and that includes the way in which historical figures with links to slavery,
	eugenics or racist views are promoted, whether through names of prizes or
	buildings or other means. Where this is the case, it needs to be addressed
	urgently to ensure Imperial is viewed as an inclusive forward-looking institution
	for all it's community and a beacon of excellence in inclusivity for the wider
	world.
	The question is where the threshold lies, where it is worth renaming a building.
	This threshold is individual to everyone but might be possible to be narrowed down in discussion.
	I would like to address the argument that names of buildings, or statues, are of
	little import. Or conversely, that their removal 'erases history'. Imagine that
	there is a proposal to name a building or raise a statue to a famous and
	repugnant - notorious - historical figure (Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Pol Pot would
	do). Would you expect anything other than outcry and revulsion? Would the
	absence of the name or the statue in any way affect the history of these figures?
	Would we risk forgetting them absent the commemoration? That we rightly do
	not raise statues to them or name buildings after them demonstrates the point.
	These are inherently celebratory acts and not ones of 'lest we forget'. We
	already remember and this is a honour that is bestowed, a sign that the person
	is venerated. These acts literally place the person on a pedestal.
	Having suggested renaming Huxley Building to Abdus Salaam Building during
	consultation, I like the suggestion of Huxley-Salaam. I fully agree with keeping
	some naming. I note there are very eminent current family members, some of
	whom do stunning work on genetics. I support the idea of, with the family
	agreement, pointing out that the overall effect of TH Huxley was mixed, and
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	was difficult to get to the key issues.
	some of the work was taken to support eugenics and the dark place where it led. I would like to reiterate the point made by Geoffrey Palmer, Chancellor of Heriot-Watt, that universities and various academics (eg Hume) have historically been thought-leaders in leading society into biases, and now should be thought-leaders in leading society back out of these biases. They (we!) are well-placed to do this and it would be a Just Restitution. I think the report has some clear shortcomings. To start with the title does not clearly indicate that it was a consultation document. Also the structure meant it was difficult to get to the key issues.

I think we do need to revisit the name of the Huxley building. His scientific findings were transformative. However his writing is clearly not inclusive considering both ethnicity and gender. I don't think you necessarily need to find a scientist from an under represented group and rename the building after them as a token gesture, but it is reasonable to take action. The situation with the Beit brothers is different, however I think the removal of their name is also justified.

The discussion on Huxley provided as the appendix to the report was very well written.

It is important for Imperial to understand the wider context in which they operate and decide if they want to take a firm stand on what they believe is right, irrespective of whether it aligns with the majority. What does Imperial believe in, what do they stand for?

It is imperative to amplify the voices of minority groups and those most negatively impacted by Imperial's history, if real change is to happen. I would like to see a clear focus on de-colonising the university, including the curriculum, and I believe it is about uncovering and teaching the whole truth (warts and all), as opposed to 'erasing' history. E.g. the introduction of a compulsory module looking at the historical context of science/STEM.

There is a wider issue of the lack of representation within mainstream history that is taught in UK schools so many stakeholders, who are used to seeing themselves represented and do not know the full and true history of the world, are likely be closed minded, sceptical, hesitant, or unwilling to accept the truth and acknowledge the injustices Imperial was involved in. There is no quick fix or easy solution, it will take an ongoing commitment to become a truly decolonised, inclusive, and anti-racist institution. Sadly, not everyone will be on board, but this should not prevent action from being taken.

Further work needs to take place to delve into reparations and how Imperial should handle this. Imperial needs to go beyond symbolic action when confronting its past – honesty, accountability and responsibility is required when trying to make amends.

I'm interested to learn what Imperial is doing to safeguard and mitigate against future condemnation – particularly thinking about research, fundraising and relationships/partnerships with future 'problematic' people or organisations.

I'd also like to add that I'm aware some staff and students have not felt able to contribute to the consultation process as they would like to do so anonymously. Is this possible?

Thank you

What about the Queen Victoria Statue in the Business School?

ā		I feel that there should have been a discussion about the name of Imperial
Name of College (beyond scope of the History Group)		College London. Changing the name of Imperial would obviously bring challenges, but I'm surprised that it was not within the remit of the History
		Dialogue, as the name speaks of imperialism and colonialism. Will the
		feasibility/importance of changing Imperial's name be reviewed?
llege (beyond s History Group)		I have been very removed from this process thus far, but partially because I
e (b tory		chose not to participate in frustration. The simple fact that the university's
olleg His		name, Imperial, was not the first point of discussion, lead me to believe this conversation had already fallen on deaf ears. A university called Imperial College
of C		is as racist and ridiculous as if it were called Apartheid University or the Colonial
ame		University of London. I honestly cannot believe this has to be pointed out in 2021, and frankly, I have some personal shame about having Imperial College
Ž		London on my CV because of what the name indicates, alone.
		Speaker: I was quite disappointed with the History Group report, because it was
		meant to study links to the British empire. But there was no mention of the practices of the College in relation to the empire. I did some research myself, we
		know Imperial has investments in arms companies and has received funding.
		Partnerships with BAE systems linked to war-crimes in Yemen (sold to Saudi illegally). Also investments in fossil fuel companies are causing devastation in the
		third world. These modern-day Imperial practices are not addressed in the
		report which is narrow sighted.
Present Relationships		Strong agree with as it was remarkable for the report to miss out these aspects.
tions		The last paragraph in the 'History Dialogue Summary' document circulated
Rela		recently states, "Some felt that Imperial ought to be reflecting more deeply on its present relationships, as well as those from its past, as these could be looked
ent		back on negatively in the near future. It was felt the College ought to reexamine
Pres		current partnership arrangements, funding, investments and donors and with regard to various environmental and ethical concerns".
		I agree and would support scrutiny of present-day activities for consistency with
		the stated values and aims of the College. The value of looking at our history is,
		in part, in being able to learn lessons and see if and how much we've changed. This might also help find common ground in the debate about 'erasing history' if
		we can acknowledge a critical ambivalence about historical associations and
		show we are not repeating the same mistakes. Given that The Queen's Lawn has now been changed to Dangoor Plaza, are there
		any plans to sell off any more of the College's legacy?
3. New 9	Suggestions	
Naming suggestions		Speaker: I am a poet and see words in different way, I have an idea to celebrate
		Narinder Singh Kapany. When we break it into two words: Sher means Singh
		means Lion & field is its field. So we could name it as Narinder Sherfiled building. We need to learn from history, not just in terms of understanding the nuances
Naı ugge		of earlier times, but in not repeating our mistakes. This means dropping the
SI		practice of naming parts of the campus after individuals.

For instance, Salam has been proposed as an alternative name for the Huxley Building. Salam was a great physicist and no doubt a good person, but how can we be sure that some years hence he will not seem problematic in a significant way? One person who worked with him described him as "bluntly authoritarian"; he played a role in the development of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, something Indian students might feel uncomfortable about; shortening his name to Salam is itself a Western corruption that some might view as unacceptable; and how would the many atheists who study and work in the building feel about it being given one of the names of Allah? That's just an example. Any individual will raise problems because we are all flawed human beings living in a complex society. This also applies to naming after contemporary financial donors, as with the recent 'Dangoor Plaza'. Why should donors' privileged wealth allow them to be memorialised on campus? Money is made through the labour and resources of others, no matter how compassionate and ethical the business is. We must stop lionising individuals who have got lucky in various ways and start promoting the collective nature of science. The only sensible solution is for spaces on campus to be named for their function. Why do we want statues of lone individuals, and buildings named after lone individuals, at all? It seems to me that this furthers the stereotype of the heroic, lone, scientist. Is that inspiring for our students and staff? Is there some other approach to naming places and choosing statues that would be better? Actions should include those that cost money (scholarships, reparations) rather than those that are free and tokenistic. 4. Future Management I contributed the factual, contextual evidence from archival As sources in response to the comments and also to the History Group report. I also engaged with academic historians of science about the T.H. Huxley essay comment, cf. Adrian Desmond's response as an academic Huxley expert, to that question. In preparation is an archival document that will be a continual work in Communicating history progress, to provide background details dating from the origins of the constituent colleges, including the associated staff and alumni. This will be a College History Reference Tool, with sources and bibliography for further reading. Regardless of whether names are changed or not, information regarding the founding of the university and the source of historic funding must be easily accessible. I, personally, would not have known about the immoral sources of the money that contributed to this university's founding, were it not for the recent discussion about name changes.

	I worry that simply changing names may essentially "hide" some of the immoral history.
	Therefore, I suggest further efforts into making such information more accessible, especially if names are changed.
	I think it's really important College keeps investigating its history, including the history of research at the College, and how Empire and the western world influenced that and continues to influence scientific practice, language and how science is taught.
	The public engagement team is keen to review the recommendations and look at how we can contribute through our public engagement activities. Could we have further discussion about public engagement at some point in the coming months? Obviously the focus is on staff and students initially, but there is great scope for a range of pubic engagement activities. The museum idea is just one example among many possibilities.
	For science to appeal to ethnic minorities what is being done to communicate at their levels? i.e in their language, giving them confidence and help financially to address a historical bias.
	For me the important thing is that we don't see this as a one off exercise, that we don't decide we've "fixed" everything whatever the final outcomes around the historic issues. Raising an awareness of how we got here is vital for us to understand where we need to go.
	Imperial 600 have raised LGBT+ representation in the report. Possibility of having a paid role to research this area more thoroughly.
SS	I personally believe exercises like this should not be a one-off, they should happen periodically, to reflect the College's changing values; eg, in the future, should we be looking at LGBT+ history at the College?
Ongoing process	Is there data on how many undergraduate, PhD and postgraduate students with BME backgrounds joined Imperial during the last fifty years? It would be good to know how the BME intake into undergraduate, graduate
Ongoi	and postgraduate education has fluctuated both for the founder subjects relating to materials science and biology (including medicine) over the last few decades. Does the history group intend to highlight the achievements of notable biologists alongside those in material sciences, and how they affected
	perceptions of the college? Re: the History Report, tunnel-vision focus, and insufficient research are being flagged with some frustration from all sides of this conversation. How will the College address these concerns?
	Re: naming buildings, wouldn't naming buildings after their function or scientific discoveries, rather than individuals, be a long-term solution to that debate?
Outcomes	I hope that what will emerge from this exercise will be a reasonable balance between cherishing our heritage, recognising that it has sometimes been flawed, making us more aware of members of the Imperial community whose strong contributions have been overlooked and a proportionate response to being associated with individuals and groups that recognises both the benefits they
O	associated with individuals and groups that recognises both the benefits the have brought to society and their shortcomings in behaviour, values or atti

Our legacy must be to ensure staff and students have equal opportunities and equal representation going forward.
It is a real shame how this forum has been used to hear the views of the gatekeepers who will at any cost keep their history intact.
Separate from the content discussed today, I think it is vital to reflect on the structure and process of this event, particularly with respect to how power is manifesting. I note how the vast majority of speakers have been men for example, and how the majority of those with cameras are men from a particular demographic. This concern reflects the composition of the history group. What needs to happen in the Imperial space to address this, ensuring a genuinely inclusive environment? Why is the lack of representation in today's forum? Would like to hear more
from unrepresented groups directly today.
I agree that optics of today's meeting looked quite odd – the faces on the screen were all fairly homogeneous – even if it wasn't the case on the actual committee. So may need a further bit of engagement with imperial as one before roll out.