



Imperial Festival 2017

Evaluation Highlights



Jenesys
Associates

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Imperial Festival is an annual event held by Imperial College London. Described on the Imperial website as *'a weekend dedicated to sharing the best science and arts on offer from Imperial'*, the main Festival has five strategic objectives:

1. To celebrate the work and community of Imperial College London
2. To make a positive contribution to Festival visitor's learning outcomes
3. To generate a positive impression of the College among Festival visitors, staff working at the Festival; and staff/students visiting the Festival
4. To increase the impact of Imperial research
5. To influence the path of research carried out at Imperial

The sixth Imperial Festival took place on Friday 5th, Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th May 2017. Friday was a Schools Day attended by invited primary schools. On Saturday and Sunday the Festival was open to the public, with the Alumni Weekend also taking place on these days.

Imperial Festival 2017 was evaluated by Sarah Jenkins & Elizabeth Jeavans (Jenesys Associates Ltd) and the findings are summarised in this document, including:

- 1) Evaluation findings from the overall festival – including the impacts on the visitors attending and the participants and volunteers taking part
- 2) Key points from the evaluation of Schools Day
- 3) Key points from the evaluation of Alumni weekend

1. Imperial Festival 2017

1. Visitor profile

Who came to the festival?

- Over half (56.5%) of Festival visitors were external to Imperial compared to 44% in 2016 and most of these were visiting Imperial for the first time.
- 81.5% of these external visitors had no connection to Imperial i.e. are not friends or family of current or former Imperial staff and students.
- 91.1% of external visitors like or love science suggesting Imperial Festival attracts members of the public with an existing interest in science
- Over half (56.1%) came from outside London - 4% and 12% up on 2016 and 2015 respectively.
- Half (50.3%) of visitors attended in groups of adults and children, and 'families with pre-teenage children' was the most commonly observed visitor type.

How did they hear about it and what motivated them to attend?

- Direct communication through email or word of mouth referral were the most important promotional channels for Imperial Festival 2017. 56.2% and 54.8% of visitors cited these forms when saying how they heard about the Festival. Social media communications were mentioned by 16.1%.
- Visitors with children attended Imperial Festival to inspire children about science or enhance children's interest in science.
- Visitors without children came to learn about latest developments in science and/or research.
- Visitors of all types came for enjoyment, including some who had attended in previous years.

Inspiring a love of science and engineering in the children, showing them robots and a university they might like to go to. (Public visitor)

2. The visitor experience

- 93.9% of visitors age 12 and over and 96.7% age under 12 rated Imperial Festival 2017 positively.

- Visitors attributed their ratings to clear, engaging presentations by Imperial staff and students.
- Visitors, including those who rated the Festival positively commented unfavourably on overcrowding and long queues.
- 89.0% gave positive ratings for the clarity of explanations given by staff and students and 89.6% rated responses by staff and students to their questions positively.
- Visitors suggested a number of ways to enhance their experience at Imperial Festival, particularly: extended opening times; wider spacing of stands; audience-specific or age-specific Zones or areas, and timed ticketing for the busiest Zones.

I am forever amazed at the range of research Imperial is conducting, and the 'explainers' are passionate, knowledgeable and EXCELLENT at adapting to a non-specialist audience. (Alumnus)

It's really lovely and an excellent idea, but it's a bit of a victim of its own success, as it's now so crowded that getting to do anything rather than just wander around is a real struggle - you can't get near half the tables. (Public visitor)

3. Visitor impacts

Intended outcomes

- 90.1% of visitors age 12 and over and 80.0% under 12 learned something new at Imperial Festival 2017.
- 88.4% increased their understanding of the research/work carried out at Imperial.
- The Festival increased their interest in science for 77.9% of visitors age 12 and over and 96.7% age under 12. This outcome was achieved even for visitors with an existing interest in science.
- 62.8% of those age 12 and over increased their knowledge of Imperial activities available to the public and 62.3% wanted to find out more about Imperial research/work.

Feelings about Imperial

- Almost all visitors suggested that Imperial Festival made them feel positively about Imperial College London.
- The Festival enhanced or generated feelings of pride for internal visitors (staff and students).
- External (public) visitors were impressed by the research on show or just the Festival itself or by Imperial's openness to engaging with the public.

It makes me realise how much more exciting science is happening at Imperial! Great way to meet other scientists at imperial. (Current student)

I had wanted to apply even before coming but now I am even more eager to study at imperial (Public visitor)

Visitor intentions

- 96.7% of visitors age 12 and over would come to another Imperial Festival, 95.0% intend to visit another Imperial public event and 97.7% would recommend Imperial Festival to someone else.
- 96.7% of those age under 12 would like to visit Imperial Festival again and the same number would tell their family or friends to come to Imperial Festival.



4. Profile of participants

Who participated in the delivery of the festival?

- 87.8% of those who participated in delivering content for Imperial Festival 2017 were staff or students of the College.
- Just under half (48.7%) of participants had not taken part in Imperial Festival before this year.

What were their aims for getting involved?

- They took part to explain their research or work to the public; because of a positive previous experience of Imperial Festival; to develop outreach skills, experience or new activities; or for personal enjoyment.
- Participants' main public engagement aims were to: communicate the significance or importance of their research; inspire young people about STEM; raise awareness of their research or department; and find out what the public think about their research.

It is an amazing opportunity to develop skills, my portfolio and above all, have fun because I love team projects. (Undergraduate student)

It's important for us to engage with families, as well as get their feedback and views, particularly given that we work with young families within our research. (Research staff)

5. The participant experience

- 91.3% of participants rated their overall experience of Imperial Festival positively.
- Positive experiences were attributed to: reactions from public visitors and generally high attendance at Imperial Festival; general enjoyment; the Festival being generally well organised and a better experience than in past years.
- The variety of visitor ages and differing levels of audience background knowledge, plus working as part of a team or a collective effort enhanced the experience for many participants.
- Most participants welcomed the support they received from the Festival organisers and all reported high levels of support from their own departments or immediate colleagues. There were some suggestions to improve pre-Festival communication from the organisers.
- Participants suggested ways that they and the central organisers could enhance the Festival.

So I really enjoy speaking to the young kids who some of them are incredibly bright and come up with some amazing things, but also all the adults, alumni, who've come back after a few decades away. (Professional Services staff)

I think it's really enjoyable to do it together. To see all your colleagues speaking to people and talk about what you said to so and so about such and such afterwards. (Professional Services staff)

It was a fabulous opportunity and the response from the public was excellent. Unfortunately we struggled to work within the amount of space allocated to us -we had people three deep in front of us, almost all weekend. The number of people and the response we received was great, but it was difficult for the public to pass by and sometimes difficult to communicate. (Academic staff)

6. Participant impacts

Intended outcomes – personal

- Imperial Festival was a rewarding and motivating experience for 92.2% of participants.
- It enhanced transferable skills for 72.7%.
- It strengthened connections with Imperial colleagues for 73.8%.

I learnt to read body language to be able to talk to more or less advanced people on the topic and also to better communicate scientific messages to the public. (Undergraduate student)

Intended outcomes-- research

- Imperial Festival raised the external profile of their research/work for 68.9% of participants.
- It raised the internal profile of their research/work for 47.6%.
- It provided new perspectives on their research/work for 36.0%.
- It enabled 23.3% to gather data for their research/work.

You get new perspectives on your work – there are people who are in academia or are in science, they come to you and they tell you something completely different. We had someone come here and he said - we had someone who was doing some data kind of thing - why don't you look at it from this angle and we can at least see if it works. (Research staff)

Intended outcomes—networking and connections

- For 45.6% of participants, Imperial Festival increased their awareness of the Imperial alumni community.
- 31.0% were introduced to potential new collaborators/partners.
- 14.65 were introduced to potential new funders.

At the festival this year I made a number of contacts, one of which has gone on to be a full collaboration for a lab colleague of mine. He's taken on a project with these people who wanted his expertise and the technology that he's designed, he's gone on to do that ...They're a start-up. They were having trouble with the tech side and my lab colleague is helping them with that and sorting out their problems. (Postgraduate student)

Participants' feelings about Imperial

- Almost all participants felt more proud of Imperial as a result of the Festival.

I was really proud of Imperial, and of being part of Imperial, over the festival weekend - made me see what an open and exciting place it can be, filled with enthusiastic and brilliant scientists who are keen to share what they do with the wider community. (Academic staff)

Other impacts for participants

- Participants described how Imperial Festival:
 - enthused or inspired to undertake more outreach or public engagement;
 - developed their knowledge and understanding of outreach or public engagement;
 - raised awareness of their work or research;
 - and strengthened feelings of community and pride within Imperial.

Other than enjoyment, teambuilding was the main impact. It's unusual to work in this way with colleagues. Sometime you were explaining their research and you got to know more about their work and them as people I suppose. (Postgraduate student)

Participants' intentions

- 83.8% of participants would take part in a future Imperial Festival.
- 91.9% would recommend taking part in the Festival to a colleague/peer.

It has demystified things a bit, so I'll be braver and more willing to give things outreach/engagement a go in the future. (Academic staff)



7. Volunteer profile

Who participated in the delivery of the festival?

- Around two-thirds (65.2%) of volunteers were internal to Imperial, i.e. staff or students.

What were their aims for getting involved?

- The main reasons for volunteering were: to support Imperial; wanting to feel involved in Imperial or feel part of the Imperial community; aiming to meet people (including for Imperial staff, meeting colleagues from outside their own teams or immediate areas of interest).
- Volunteers in all categories volunteered for enjoyment or to have fun and a similar number were curious about both the Festival and Imperial itself.
- Many sixth-form student volunteers wanted to develop their CVs or personal statements for university applications.

It's a fun and great way to be and feel involved in the Imperial community. (Professional Services staff)

8. The volunteer experience

- 87.8% rated their overall experience as a volunteer at Imperial Festival positively.

- Ratings were influenced by the extent which supervisors communicated effectively with volunteers and by the nature of tasks to which volunteers were assigned.
- Most who had volunteered at Imperial Festivals in previous years indicated that the experience was better this year, due to more specific briefings.
- Volunteers made some specific suggestions to improve the volunteer experience and to enhance the environment for visitors, particularly around better spacing in popular areas to ease congestion.

9. Volunteer impacts

Intended outcomes for volunteers

- Imperial Festival was a rewarding and motivating experience for 87.7% of volunteers.
- It enhanced transferable skills for 70.2% of all volunteers.
- It strengthened connections with Imperial colleagues for 68.5% of the volunteers who were staff or students at Imperial.
- It introduced 40.4% of all volunteers to new contacts.

Other impacts for volunteers

- Many volunteers described how they learned more about the research carried out at Imperial and most enjoyed being part of Imperial Festival.
- Almost all volunteers reported that experiencing Imperial Festival 2017 had positive impacts on their feelings about Imperial College London, with increased pride and a greater sense of community being emphasised.
- Sixth-form student volunteers indicated that the Festival experience inspired them to want to study at Imperial.

It made me realise the depth of all branches of science that Imperial does. (External volunteer)

I enjoyed the experience, and it does showcase a more informal and friendly side of Imperial. (Professional Services staff)

Volunteers' intentions

- 70.8% of volunteers would volunteer at a future Imperial Festival.
- 84.3% would recommend being a volunteer at Imperial Festival to someone else.



2. Schools Day 2017

1. Schools day profile

- 70% of the accompanying adults had not been to Imperial before Schools Day

2. Schools day experiences

- 96.7% accompanying adults rated the activities at Imperial Schools day as 'Excellent'
- The most successful aspects were deemed to be interactivity, short-duration of activities and wide range of science covered.

Experiments/explanations pitched perfectly to the children. All the experiments were really interesting and varied. (Teacher)

3. Impacts on adults

- One-third of respondents reported that Schools Day had **increased their awareness of the variety and range of the research that is undertaken** at Imperial College London.
- One-third of respondents said that Schools Day had given them **ideas for future science lessons**. A further one-sixth described how they would be introducing more practical or interactive elements in lessons. Two teachers said they would become more involved in science in their schools and one said their school would be running their own child-led science festival.
- All adults said they would **like to visit Imperial College London with pupils in the future**.

4. Impacts on pupils

- 95.2% enjoyed visiting Imperial (96% in 2016)
- 85.1% would like to visit Imperial again (88% in 2016)
- 90.7% learned something new at Schools Day (94% in 2016). Almost all pupils described something they had learnt at Schools Day when prompted
- 82.4% of pupils said they were more interested in science after Schools Day (83% in 2016)

My favourite part today was controlling a car with my mind because it was interesting, fun and something new to do. (Pupil)



3. Alumni weekend

1. Alumni profile

- 82.8% attended both Imperial Festival and Alumni Weekend
- The most common reason for attending Imperial Festival and Alumni Weekend was *to share Imperial with my friends and/or family* (51.6%)

2. Alumni experience

- 93.6% of respondents rated Alumni Weekend 2017 above average, indicating they had a positive overall experience, which compares to 80% in 2016
- Most respondents (91.3%) also rated Alumni Weekend 2017 above average in terms of value for money, with the equivalent figure being 80% last year
- Alumni were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how likely they are to recommend a similar event to another alumnus, where 1 = not at all likely and 10 = very likely. The most common selection was 10 (39.8%) and 88.2% of respondents selected 7 or above

For me it was great getting access to an area that we were never allowed as students (the tunnels). (Alumnus)

3. Impacts on Alumni

- 52.7% strongly agreed or agreed it *enabled me to interact and connect with other alumni.* (64% in 2016)
- 66.7% strongly agreed or agreed it *raised my awareness of the achievements of Imperial alumni.* (78% in 2016)
- 73.1% strongly agreed or agreed it *made me feel valued as an Imperial alumnus.* (73% in 2016)
- 57.0% strongly agreed or agreed it *increased the feeling of community among Imperial alumni* (not asked in 2016)
- 80.7% strongly agreed or agreed that *I will attend Alumni Weekend in the future.* (73% in 2016)

4. Conclusions

The evaluation of Imperial Festival 2017 provides evidence of a highly successful event, which is fully achieving most of its intended outcomes and making a considerable contribution towards societal engagement at Imperial.

Defining features of the 2017 Festival were the large numbers of visitors and the fact it was attended by children and adults, which participants welcomed. Overcrowding and lengthy queues were visible markers of the Festival's success but they have emerged as a significant challenge as there is evidence that they detract from the visitor experience and levels of engagement. These issues, amongst others, will be considered in the planning and development for future Festivals.

The 2017 Festival was an effective public engagement activity that has contributed to widening public understanding and involvement in Imperial research. It presented Imperial in a very positive light and generated positive feelings about Imperial and delivered learning outcomes for external and internal visitors, participants and volunteers. Feedback from visitors suggested that they had an enjoyable, engaging and inspiring experience at the festival and would be keen to return. Participants and volunteers described how their involvement led to increased understanding and drive to do more engagement, as well as generating new ideas and perspectives on their work and role at Imperial.

Appendix: Evaluation methodology

Festival Visitor survey

A total of 499 individuals of all ages who had visited Imperial Festival 2017 provided valid responses to the Festival visitor survey, including 77 respondents who attended both Imperial Festival and Alumni Weekend. 277 responses (55.5%) were collected during the days the Festival was open to the public. 89 responses (17.8%) were received from alumni who were sent a survey invitation by the Alumni Weekend team after the Festival. 133 responses (26.7%) were solicited via the Festival website and social media feeds. The survey questions were branched according to demographic and background information, so that only appropriate questions were asked to each category and age group of visitor. They included a simplified set of questions for respondents aged under 12 (60 respondents).

Additional questions about the Alumni Weekend activities were completed by 77 respondents who attended both Imperial Festival and Alumni Weekend and a further 16 respondents who attended Alumni Weekend only (93 respondents in total).

Schools Day questionnaires

289 pupils and 30 teachers completed hard copy questionnaires after they had visited a structured programme of activities on Festival Schools Day.

Participant and Volunteer surveys

115 staff, students and others who delivered activities at the Festival provided responses to a 'participants' e-survey.

115 Imperial Festival Volunteers provided responses to a 'volunteers' e-survey.

In-Festival visitor interviews

Short face-to-face interviews were conducted with 52 visitor groups, representing 78 individual visitors, during the Saturday and Sunday of Imperial Festival. 23 of those groups comprised families.

Post-Festival Participant Interviews

12 participants who had delivered activities during the 2017 Festival were interviewed by phone between 7 and 10 weeks after it took place to explore themes that emerged from the surveys in greater depth and to obtain longer-term reflections about individuals' experiences and outcomes including, where relevant, any impacts from previous Imperial Festivals.

