

Imperial College Union  
**Imperial College Constitution – Supporting Note**  
*A Note by Jon Matthews*

Firstly, I apologize to Council for the fact that this paper may appear somewhat dry and uninteresting.

At the end of the last academic year, the Union's constitution was changed to create a Trustee Board and, at the same time, some other changes were introduced. The Constitution then in force required all constitutional amendments to be passed by two-thirds majority at two consecutive meetings of Council, the changes would then have to be passed by the College Council.

The documents presented to the last two meetings of Union Council had some very significant and material differences; whilst a note was laid before the Council asking them to accept that changes would be proposed between the two readings, there was no vote to suspend the constitutional requirement for two readings, nor would the Council have had the power so to do should such a vote been called and carried. To further confuse matters, the document presented to, and passed by the College Council was different from either two documents presented to the Union Council. This has left us with three different versions of the Constitution, none of which have been suitably passed (whilst the College Council has the power to force a constitution on the Union, they may only do this when they have requested, in writing, specific changes to be made and the Union has refused to make these changes and even then they are only empowered to enforce the changes they requested).

Obviously this is not a satisfactory situation and has caused a great deal of confusion with various different versions of the Constitution in circulation and use, this confusion has caused some very real problems and needs resolving. What is most concerning about some of the changes presented in the second reading is that they were fundamental changes and yet these changes were neither tracked nor highlighted and others, whilst tracked, were not discussed and appeared (by the colour used to highlight the change) to have been changes presented in the first document even though they were not (for example the reduction in the number of readings required to amend the Constitution).

As a result of this, I have compiled a version of the Constitution as it was passed at the second meeting of Council although those paragraphs recorded as changed in the minutes of College Council are as passed by that body. I have not inserted any changes to this document although I feel changes are desperately needed to some points to remove confusion, correct some mistakes (such as a gap in financial authorization limits) and also restore the power of this body over the constitution. The Constitution presented to this meeting does not have tracked changes as it is a complete re-write owing to so much having been changed and changed again that a *de novo* document was the only sensible step.

This document also contains the Code of Practice as a Regulation in the full document rather than in a separate document and also all annexes to this Code of Practice so far available. I urge all members of Council to read the Code of Practice and its associated annexes with great care as there are a number of points in it that caused me a lot of concern whilst I was re-typing them.

I am requesting that Council consider this document as a whole and also, although the final version of the Constitution requires constitutional changes only to be read once, as this change did not go through two meetings of Union Council as was required by the Constitution then in force, I am requesting that Council consider this document at two separate meetings with both votes needing to be passed at two-thirds majority. I have not presented any amendments to this meeting as I feel it important to get the Constitution re-passed in a clear and transparent manner as a matter of urgency, I hope to bring some proposed changes to the next meeting of Council (and expect that there will be changes brought by others as well), this will allow the version of the Constitution passed by the last meeting of Council last year to be re-passed in an unchanged format and then amendments to this to be debated in a clear and transparent manner.

JM – 14/01/08