



MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS of the fourth ordinary meeting of the
Council of the Imperial College Union
in the 2011/12 Session

The meeting of the Council was held in the Union Dining Hall on the 12th December 2011 at
6.40pm.

Present:

Council Chair	David Smith
President	Scott Heath
Deputy President (Clubs & Societies)	Monya Zard
Deputy President (Education)	Jason Parmar
Deputy President (Finance & Services)	Michael Foster
Deputy President (Welfare)	Nicolas Massie
C&GCU President	Jacky Kwan
ICSMSU President	Suzie Rayner
RCSU President	Luke Kanczes
RSMU Chair	Richard Simons
A&E Chair	Chandana Shankar
ACC Chair	Henry Abbot
RCC Chair	Dominic Andradi-Brown
SCC Chair	Kajann Prathapan
CAG Chair	Heather Jones
RAG Chair	Jack Hewitt
Equal Ops Officer	Dolan Miu
CGCU Welfare Officer	Hilary Andrew
RCSU Welfare Officer	Jiajun Tan
ICSMSU Rep 12 & GEP	Steven Tran
RCSU Academic Affairs Officer	Rosalyn Flower
GSA Engineering Academic and Welfare Officer	Mark Collins
GSA Life Science Academic and Welfare Officer	Lisa Hale
GSA Medicine academic and Welfare Officer	Mai Kadi
Non Faculty Ordinary Member	Sally Hancock
CGCU Ordinary Member (UG)	Justin Chan
CGCU Ordinary Member (UG)	Carol-Ann Cheah
CGCU Ordinary Member (UG)	Sahil Dawar
CGCU Ordinary Member (UG)	Toller Hao
RCSU Ordinary Member (UG)	Ryan Browne
RCSU Ordinary Member (UG)	Maciej Matuszewski
RCSU Ordinary Member (UG)	Guan Yeap
RCSU Ordinary Member (UG)	James Tsim
ICSMSU Ordinary Member (UG)	Shrawan Patel
CGCU Ordinary Member (PG)	Naser Ali
CGCU Ordinary Member (PG)	Edo Abraham
CGCU Ordinary Member (PG)	Jithin Gopal

Permanent observers

Governance and Administration Co-ordinator (Clerk to Council) Rebecca Coxhead

Apologies: Silwood Park Chair Fran Sconce GSA Chair Robert Tang, CGCU Academic Officer Susuana Laryea, ICSMSU OM UG Ali Hosin

Not Present: CGCU President Jackie Chan ICSMSU PG rep Bing Xia

1. CHAIRS BUSINESS

NOTED:

- a) New members of Council were welcomed to the meeting.
- b) It was reminded that Councillors are to arrive before 6.30pm to allow members to sign in and get seated to the meeting starting promptly at 6.30pm.
- c) A response from Union Court was read out by the Chair in regards to the Summer Ball enquiry.
 - i. The Chair will circulate the response by email.

- ii. If any member wishes to see the financial breakdown of the Summer Ball 2011 that was presented to Council at the last meeting, they can request these by emailing the Governance Coordinator.

2. MINUTES – 14.11.11

RESOLVED:

- 1) To pass the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING – none

4. PRESIDENTS REPORT

RECEIVED: The report was presented by the President

NOTED:

- a) The Student Charter working group has been set up by College and is creating a document that essentially holds staff to account.
 - i. This is already happening in some departments.
- b) Council moved to a vote on accepting the report and it passed unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To accept the report.

5. DEPUTY PRESIDENT (CLUBS AND SOCIETIES)

RECEIVED: The report was presented by the Deputy President (Clubs and Societies)

NOTED:

- a) The Deputy President (Clubs & Societies) and ICSMSU had just met with Sport Imperial to try to plan a way forward and it was decided to work with BUCS to find a solution.
 - i. A paper will come to Council in January outlining a way forward.
- b) Council moved to a vote on accepting the report and it passed unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To accept the report.

6. DEPUTY PRESIDENT (EDUCATION)

RECEIVED: The report was presented by the Deputy President (Education)

NOTED:

- a) Council moved to a vote on accepting the report and it passed unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To accept the report.

7. DEPUTY PRESIDENT (FINANCE & SERVICES)

RECEIVED: The report was presented by the Deputy President (Finance & Services)

NOTED:

- a) It was queried as to what the excess is on the insurance of Union safes.
 - i. The Deputy President (Finance & Services) stated that he will look in to this.

ACTION:

- 1. The Deputy President (Finance & Services) to investigate what the excess is on the insurance of Union Safes.**
- b) The Entertainments Strategy Working Group will be set up and meet in the New Year.
 - i. The Deputy President (Finance & Services) will be sending an email out asking for volunteers.
 - ii. The group will be different to the Ents Committee as it is looking at Ents as a whole; both central union and Faculty Union.
 - iii. It was stated that the Ents committee elections were poorly publicised and communicated
 - c) The ACC Chair stated that in his opinion the Deputy President (Finance & Services) report is not indicative to what the Deputy President (Finance & Services) does and that it is felt that staff are doing the work that the DPFS is reporting on.
 - d) The opinion was expressed that the Deputy President (Finance & Services) role is more paper based rather than strategic.
 - e) The Deputy President (Finance & Services) stated that the role does require a lot of paperwork that constitutionally can not be handed over.
 - f) It has been suggested that the Deputy President (Finance & Services) can measure 'stacks' of paper work that can then be reported to Council if it wants an indication of how busy the Deputy President (Finance & Services) day is.
 - g) The Deputy President (Finance & Services) deals with staffing issue that cannot be reported and the Executive Committee see the 'nuts and bolts' of the role.
 - h) The nature of the Deputy President (Finance & Services) role is that there are a lot of internal meetings and ad hoc investigations that also make up the day to day workload.
 - i) It was queried whether Council wants a section included in the Deputy President (Finance & Services) report with a breakdown of how his time is spent or strategic updates.
 - i. There is no template for how reports are structured or what must be included when they come to Council.
 - j) The President stated that he includes what meetings he has attended just for transparency.
 - k) It was agreed that the next report to Council by the Deputy President (Finance & Services) will include his 'day to day' diary.

ACTION:

- 1. The next report to Council by the Deputy President (Finance & Services) to include his 'day to day' diary.**
- l) A document is being created of that outlines what clubs can expect and what the need to provide when submitted sales invoices for processing.
 - m) Council moved to a vote on accepting the report and it passed unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To accept the report.**

8. DEPUTY PRESIDENT (WELFARE) REPORT

RECEIVED: The report was presented by the Deputy President (Welfare)

NOTED:

- a) A bank of questions in the Student Experience survey was removed that pertained to questions of a personal nature; depression, sexual experiences, drugs and alcohol.
 - i. It was thought that it may upset students to see them and there was not enough discussion about these even though it had been approved by the Management Board.
 - ii. The questions are going to the Ethics Board for approval in January.
 - iii. The questions could possibly be asked by the Union in a standalone survey.
- b) Council moved to a vote on accepting the report and it passed unanimously apart from 1 abstention.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To accept the report.

9. POST-QUALIFICATION ADMISSIONS (PQA)

RECEIVED: The paper was presented by the President

NOTED:

- a) Union Beliefs point 2 was amended to remove point 3.2 as although the system is complication for College, it is actually not complicated for users.

RESOLVED:

- 1) 'Union Beliefs' point 2 is to have 3.2 removed.
- b) MP Simon Hughes is going to assist in constructing a response.
- c) Council moved to a vote on the 'Union Beliefs' point by point and they are as follows:

Point 1	FOR	28
	AGAINST	1
	ABSTAIN	2
	Passes	
Point 2	FOR	30
	AGAINST	0
	ABSTAIN	1
	Passes	
Point 3	FOR	29
	AGAINST	0
	ABSTAIN	2
	Passes	
Point 4	FOR	21
	AGAINST	3
	ABSTAIN	6
	Passes	

RESOLVED:

- 1) To pass the presented policy (see appendix)

10. REQUEST TO DEBATE WHETHER TO SUPPORT THE UCU CAMPAIGN FOR FAIRER PENSIONS - WITHDRAWN

This agenda item was deferred until the next meeting

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS none

Meeting closed 7.30pm

Approved as a correct record at a meeting of Union Council on

_____ 2011/12

_____ Chair of the Meeting

Imperial College Union
Post-Qualification Admissions (PQA)
A Paper by ICU President – Scott Heath

Background

1. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) released an Admissions Process Review Consultation on Thursday 27th October 2011.
2. This Consultation was designed to look at the areas of difficulty within the UCAS Application Process as well as points of inequality such as predicted grades.
3. UCAS believes:
 - 3.1 Many students make choices about their courses before they are ready to do so,
 - 3.2 The current system is complex and not transparent,
 - 3.3 There is a divide between students which access to good advice and advisors and those who don't, leading to unfairness,
4. UCAS has shown, by using the 2010 data available:
 - 4.1 Almost 700,000 students applied for UK universities.
 - 4.2 Of these, 582,000 (84%) applied with Predicted Grades as a performance indicator.
 - 4.3 A sample of the Predicted Grade Applicants (37.7%) was analysed. It showed that 51.7% of predictions were exact; 6.6% were under-predicted and the remaining 41.7% were over-predicted.
 - 4.4 Students can apply to a maximum of 5 universities through UCAS. Of these, 76.4% of applicants went into their Firm Choice (i.e. their preferred option) with only 7.8% using their insurance choice (i.e. their second choice).
 - 4.5 Of the remaining applicants, 9.6% were forced into the clearing system.
5. The full data set is available from the UCAS Website, as a booklet called 'APR Consultation Evidence Base.'
6. Imperial College believes that, as the courses here require some of the highest grades in the country, only the under-predicted students should be a direct concern to us.
7. UCAS devised a potential alternative to the application process which they believe is a better way to apply to University and Colleges.
8. The alternative would require students to apply to University after they have received their A-Level (or equivalent) examination results.
9. If accepted the proposed alternative would be in place by 2016, with an interim year in 2015.
10. This proposal has caused a large amount of discussion. It has been supported by Members of Parliament, NUS and others but actively opposed by Universities, Exam Boards and Schools.
11. It is noted that Post-qualification admission has been shown to be successful in countries such as Scotland.

The new application model

UCAS's proposal has suggested a three-part entrance route to University, named Apply One, Two and Three.

This process will require A-Level examinations to start earlier as the majority of home students would be expected to apply to University in early June.

The model proposes a Higher Educational Institute (HEI) start date of early October for first year students. This is typical for Imperial College but, as we are all too aware, is later than most of our counterparts.

Apply One

Students who received their results in the previous academic year will be permitted to apply to University at the start of the application cycle – expected to be January.

Apply Two

This will open a week before results are received, at the end of June and finish in the third week of July. Student would make only two choices and would be informed by the University as to whether they have been accepted or rejected by September.

Apply Three

This will be the way that students who get rejected by their two choices attempt to find a place at a University. It will be open at the end of July and close in early October.

As stated in the Background, there are many people arguing for and arguing against this proposal. I have summarised these arguments; however the lists are not exhaustive:

Arguments for this model

1. Students will have their results when they apply. This will mean:
 - 1.1 The disadvantages made due to errors with predicted grades become history.
 - 1.2 Students from poorer backgrounds should become less disadvantaged. Several reports, including the UCAS's 'Estimating the Reliability of Predicted Grades' highlight that students from the highest socioeconomic background receive the most accurately predicted grades.
 - 1.3 It will be easier for universities to assess the academic capabilities of students.
2. Students will have longer to consider their University choices; meaning they will make more education decisions about where to study. It is hoped that this will lower the drop out rate.
3. The existence of Apply One will motivate some students to take Gap Years. These are seen by many to be beneficial as they produce well-rounded students. Students who undertake them are also able to consider their University choice even further, so hopefully make an even more educated decision.
4. The clearing system is chaotic. As the statistics show, the majority of people are accepted and go to their 1st and 2nd preference. By people applying to Universities that they have the grades to attend, the numbers needing the 'clearing alternative' i.e. Apply Three, should reduce.
5. Introducing this system will force Universities to become more efficient with their application process i.e. faster and more efficient interviews, admissions tests, more online/distance admissions options, etc. This will be beneficial for existing students as less time will be devoted to the application cycle and will benefit future students as time devoted to getting into University is reduced.
6. Post-Qualification Admission has been on the agenda for decades. With all the changes in Higher Education now is the best (and most likely) time to get this proposal accepted.

Arguments against this model

1. The academic timetable will probably change. Conversations with the Undergraduate Admissions Committee highlighted that it is expected that University would start as late as January. Some of the effects of this would be:
 - 1.1 University ending later for students. This would force employers to chance their graduate programs or disadvantage UK students who attend universities with a long final term.
 - 1.2 International Students, who have to deal with rather complex Visa systems, could be greater deterred from studying in the UK. This would be beneficial to the international competition to UK Higher Educational Institutes as they would offer earlier start times but could reduce the internationality of our Universities.
2. Lecturers and staff would be required to do student admission interviews during the busiest time in the academic calendar. The effect to research schedules and staff motivation to teach during term is unknown as they miss out key research and conference time.
3. Interviews would have to be conducted in a window no longer than three weeks. Many Imperial Students apply to other institutes which interview, which makes the application process more stressful and difficult.

4. These proposals will do little to help the widening participation agenda i.e. they favour students from less disadvantaged backgrounds. This is justified by:
 - 4.1 Apply One motivating students to undertake a Gap Year/a year out of the education cycle.
 - 4.2 Students being required to attend interviews at short notice. Transport is cheaper with foresight and advanced booking.
 - 4.3 Students with greater access to free cash will be able to visit more Universities and thus have a more balanced view on where to go when they get their results – the UCAS data showed that over 50% of students attend open days.
 - 4.4 Students from such backgrounds can have their requirements mildly adjusted. If such a student slightly misses the grade requirements necessary they will not apply. However they may have been given an offer that their performance would meet had they been interviewed under the current environment.
5. Students will become even more focused on grades; further devaluing extra curricular activities.
6. The problems UCAS wish to rectify are clearing and unfair predictions. The primary is replicated by Apply Three and the latter could be resolved without overhauling the application process.

Beliefs

It is my belief that we as a Union should not support the UCAS recommendations. As such I recommend these Union beliefs:

The Union believes that:

1. The best way to judge the performance of a student is after they have performed. As such the ideology of Post-Qualification Admissions is supported by us.
2. The views of UCAS outlined in 3.1 and 3.3 are supported by us.
3. The proposed model involving Apply One, Two and Three will create significant upheaval and is not proven to help the Widening Participation agenda. We do not support this proposal.
4. Energy should be focused on fixing the predictions allocation method as opposed to radically changing the application process. There is great uncertainty in the Higher Education Sector. Upheaval should be the last resort.