

Council
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Imperial College Union
Response to BUCS Single Representation Changes
By Monya Zard, Deputy President (Clubs & Societies)

Background

Imperial College London currently competes as two institution titles in the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) competition framework - Imperial College and Imperial Medicals. This is a historical remnant from when the various Medical Schools were merged to become the Imperial College School of Medicine and is reflected in that we still have separate clubs for many sports.

On Thursday 14th July 2011 the BUCS Annual General Meeting was held. Agenda item 5(a) proposed a change to the BUCS Articles of Association rules on Further Education membership and a change to regulation 7. This change has no direct impact on Imperial College Union.

The various papers are available online at
<http://www.bucs.org.uk/page.asp?section=14278§ionTitle=AGM>

However contention arose from Further Information point 2 of paper 5(a) which stated:

- 2. Some further anomalies remain – BUCS is aware that some HEI's currently permit some schools or departments within HEI's to compete as individual members despite actually being a formally recognised part of the University (This applies mostly to former medical schools). BUCS will work with those institutions affected by this to remove this anomaly in the coming year with a view to all such arrangements ceasing from 2012. Any institutions which wish to make this change immediately are welcome to do so.*

After discussion on the evening before the AGM with the affected institutions this point was removed from consideration, though the remainder of the paper was passed. At the time BUCS stated that they would be in consultation with the affected Institutions in the coming year to bring about the change.

Despite numerous emails and calls to BUCS there has been no consultation with Imperial College Union, although Sport Imperial have been contacted. A meeting was held with the affected Institutions last term, but similarly no Student Unions were invited.

The draft minutes from the AGM last July have been requested from BUCS a number of times, but still not received.

Main Issues

The extract reproduced above clearly has an implication for how our sports teams compete within BUCS if the current arrangements are to cease from the beginning of the 2012/13 season. A summary of the main arguments for and against what BUCS are proposing are:

1. Arguments for playing as one institution
 - a. In the premier (top) leagues a glass ceiling is applied where only one team is permitted per institution, therefore one institution potentially being able to enter two teams is unfair.
 - b. If all BUCS points fall under one Institution, our standing could be improved in the overall national league table (though this is not a goal of the Union). For last season, if our points would have been combined we would have finished one place higher in the table (16th rather than 17th)
 - c. The rule has always existed and Imperial has just been unnoticed, BUCS is simply rectifying this.
2. Arguments against playing as one institution
 - a. Imperial Medicals have a strong sense of identity with their own teams. Playing as one institution could diminish this.
 - b. One of the key strategic aims of BUCS is participation, and if fewer teams can be entered this change could reduce participation.

Other issues

Various other issues are of interest in this matter. Other institutions would be impacted by the potential changes, two approaches to the situation which are of note are:

- Kings College London Students' Union discussed this matter at their council meeting in December. They resolved to hold a referendum for a week in February of all KCL students on the matter of whether to merge their equivalent medic and non-medic sports clubs. It is not proposed to consider this is an option at Imperial.
- Cardiff have established their position as wishing to maintain the current situation and have the support of their Vice Chancellor. They have suggested that if the main issue is that institutions can have more than one team in a top league then a self-imposed glass ceiling could be applied – ie. Only one of Imperial or Imperial Medicals could be in a top league for a particular sport. Currently this would not impact any of our teams.

It is useful to note that in the two weekly staff update sent on 17th July 2011 the rector said the following:

"I used to love running. But I also love to watch team sports, not least when Imperial is winning. I'm proud of our 17th place in the BUCS league this year - now to topple Cambridge! It would be wonderful if we were to field our strongest united Imperial teams to do that."

Proposed Solution

During a meeting with Club Captains (both ICSMSU and ACC) on Monday 5th December 2011, Sport Imperial proposed a solution, should the change occur. The change is largely administrative, and will involve no merging of clubs.

It is proposed that each year teams are ranked based on the previous year's performance, and assigned their BUCS team slot based on this (see below example). BUCS have agreed to allow the brackets to remain.

Internal Ranking	Imperial Team Names	BUCS Team Names
1 st	Imperial 1 st	Imperial 1 st
2 nd	Imperial Medicals 1 st	Imperial (Medicals) 2 nd
3 rd	Imperial Medicals 2 nd	Imperial (Medicals) 3 rd
4 th	Imperial 2 nd	Imperial 4 th

While the solution is not entirely complete, there are some issues which arose during discussion:

- Will there be a top ceiling problem? i.e. Will more than one Imperial team be able to play in the same league. Will this be the case for all sports and all leagues?
- Will BUCS put a limit on the number of teams an institution is allowed to enter per sport?
- What will happen to the walkover/points deduction system which relates to withdrawals and forfeiting of matches?
- What is the longevity of the proposed decisions?

Furthermore there is an open question over priority allocation of space which has not been considered yet.

It was agreed in the meeting that this was an acceptable solution providing the specific queries highlighted in this paper can be addressed.

Resolves

1. To either:
 - a. Work with Sport Imperial and BUCS to implement the proposed solution, including answering queries raised in the previous meeting. This is on the proviso that BUCS will implement the proposed changes without any further consultation. If a vote is called on the matter (such as may be lobbied for by other Students' Unions) a direction would be sought from Council as to how our votes should be cast.
 - b. To actively lobby BUCS, Sport Imperial and the College as an institution to maintain the current status quo, with Imperial College Union and Imperial Medicals remaining separate in the league tables.