

Board of Trustees

Trustees Away Day 2014 – outcomes and learning points.

1.0 Introduction and background

- 1.1 In April 2014 Imperial College Union funded its second annual Trustees Away Day. The event was attended by current Trustees, incoming Officer Trustees and (elected) Student Trustees, the Managing Director and members of the Senior Management Team.
- 1.2 The day was themed around Governance, and included presentations from the Managing Director, the Chair of the Governance Committee and an external consultant. Themes included the roles and responsibilities of Trustees, Generative Governance, the Code of Good Governance and an Board Effectiveness Review and Skills Audit.
- 1.3 In a feedback survey attendees were asked to outline any key outcomes and learning point from the day. Many of these related to having a greater, or refreshed, understanding of the role of the Board and the responsibilities of Trusteeship.
- 1.4 Some of the other outcomes and learning points were related to practical suggestions on how our governance could improve. These areas broadly fall into two area. The first area was concerned with improving the administration , support and communication channels related to Board, Board Committees and other areas of the Union, and the second area was related to the Board having more time to discuss detailed issues, develop relationships and focus on 'generative thinking.
- 1.5 This paper was developed to highlight the potential action areas for discussion at the Governance Committee for action, or referral to the Board. These specific suggestions have been generated from discussions that have taken place at, and since, the away day.
- 1.6 The Union's Governance Committee approved the recommendations in this paper during its meeting in June, and these recommendations are now submitted to the full Board for approval.

2.0 Administration, Support and Communication

- 2.1 It is clear that as the Union increases the quality and scale of its governance processes that the extra requirements on Trustees and Senior Managers should be supported with more detailed, and longer tem planning. It is essential:
 - 2.1.1 That the linkages between the Board and the sub-committees are effective, that work is not duplicated or contradictory.
 - 2.1.2 That Trustees of all types are able to attend meetings if at all possible,
 - 2.1.3 That meetings do not happen too close to each other

- 2.1.4 That Agendas are not crowded with too many items of business
- 2.1.5 That Board and Committee members are given ample time to read and understand papers and to ask questions of the authors before the Board meetings

2.2 To these ends the following developments are suggested.:

- 2.2.1 A **rolling 18-24 month planning cycle** for Board Meetings, Committee Meetings and Away Days is introduced. The meeting dates should be updated every six months, at least 18 months in advance.
- 2.2.2 The introduction of quarterly, informal, **governance management meetings** between the Board Chair, all Sub Committee chairs, the Managing Director and the Union President to discuss current and future business of Board Committees
- 2.2.3 That **each subcommittee is allocated a Senior Manager**, other than the Managing Director, who will be responsible, alongside the committee chair and the Governance and Administration Manager, for the effective planning and administration of that Committee.
- 2.2.4 That consideration is given to the introduction **of further subcommittees of the Board** (for example Communications and Campaigns), that the Governance Committee committees consider this question annually and make recommendations to the Board of Trustees as necessary
- 2.2.5 That **formal deadlines for the submission and distribution of papers** for the Board and sub-committees are introduced with the deadline for the Board and Sub Committees being two weeks and one week respectively.
- 2.2.6 That the Governance Committee develop, and the Board of Trustees approve a **'Matrix' of Committees**, which outlines which committees are responsible for which areas of activity. An example where this might not already be clear could be the Training of new Trustees – would this be Governance Committee or Appointments and Remuneration?

3.0 Detailed and informal discussion time for Board

- 3.1 As the Union's governance and management functions have expanded in scope and complexity and as the strategic choices facing the Union have expanded, the view of many Board members what that time should be made to have discussion about the future Mission, Values and Strategy of the Union, rather than just focusing on current, formal business.
- 3.2 The idea of bringing together senior managers and incoming and outgoing Trustees at the May Away Day was seen as a broadly positive initiative, many felt this should be expanded, by including Trustees in the Sabbatical induction process and considering including Union Councillors in similar events in the future.

3.3 Consideration was also given to the idea of running residential events for Board Members, to include formal, generative and social elements. There was broad support for this idea but concern about the need to ensure that there was enough content and outcomes to justify the times and expense related to such events.

3.4 To these ends the following steps are proposed:

- 3.4.1 That the Away Day is maintained, broadly in its current format but consideration is given on how to retain the 'Introduction to Trusteeship' element for incoming trustees whilst ensuring that the content remains relevant for existing Trustees.
- 3.4.2 That a session that includes the External and Student Trustees is included in the Sabbatical Training Process and that a social event for Trustees is included in this week.
- 3.4.3 That a residential event for Trustees is trialled in Summer /Autumn 2015, involving the 2015/16 Sabbatical team. This event should be focused on agreeing a plan to develop the Union's Strategy 2016-2020.
- 3.4.4 That, if the trial is successful, a residential event takes place in early Summer 2016, to include incoming and outgoing Sabbatical teams, to focus on the final stages development of the Union's Strategy 2016-2020.

4.0 Proposal

4.1 The Governance Committee are asked to consider and discuss the above proposals. If agreed by Governance Committee provision where appropriate should be made in the Union's budgets

4.2 Following discussion and amendment by the Governance Committee the final outcomes should be shared with the full Board of Trustees for their information and input

Joe Cooper –Managing Director

Andy Heeps – Chair of Governance Committee