

Investors in People Accreditation

Introduction

Investors in People is a quality standard that measures an organisations commitment to staff engagement, focus on training and development and focus on an organisational vision.

As part of the Union's strategic plan, Our Plan 2013-16, goal SO3 stated that we would 'Demonstrate our commitment to being an excellent employer by securing and retaining Investors in People status'. Since 2013 the Union has put in place a number of new initiatives and completed a process of culture change across the organisation that enabled us to achieve accreditation in February 2015.

This paper highlights some of those changes, lessons learned, and suggests how we can continue to demonstrate our commitment to being a great place to work.

Changes and initiatives

Since 2013 the Union has initiated a number of new initiatives that have helped us achieve the IIP standard. A few of them include:

- **Personal Development Reviews (PDR)**
Each member of staff receives a review every six months that focuses on objective setting and identifying training needs. The review is also a chance for staff members to highlight any issues or reflect on success.
- **Access to Training Process**
One historical view amongst staff was that training was only available to a select few. The new process, directly linked to PDRs, enables all staff to apply for training opportunities and for the Senior Management Team to identify organisational training needs.
- **Staff Survey**
The annual staff survey gives staff an opportunity to give feedback on a wide-range of subjects including awareness of their objectives, feeling of recognition and their line managers. Each department and the Union as a whole develop action plans from the results of the survey and the changes are fed back to staff.
- **New Staff Induction/Buddy Scheme**
The Union has developed a staff section of the website as well as an Induction Pack that all new staff get given. Both of these contain useful information for staff and links to College services. All new staff also get paired up with a 'buddy' that can help them with any questions they have outside of their line management structure.
- **Staff Development Day**
Each summer, all staff spend a day focusing on some development topics that have been identified as part of an organisational priority or from issues that have arisen from the staff survey.

Outcome of Assessment

An external IIP assessor attended the Union for two days in February interviewing 17 random members of staff. At the end of the two days it was clear that the Union had surpassed what was required to meet the standard. A report was subsequently published with particular highlights including:

- *“Imperial College Union has a strong commitment to leading, managing and developing people as effectively as possible with a drive to continuously improve the performance of the organisation.”*
- *“people are passionate about what they do and are proud to work for the Union. People enjoy the environment they work in and feel they make a positive difference to the performance of the Union.”*
- *“Imperial College Union has a very friendly, positive culture and people throughout the organisation enjoy working there and are loyal and dedicated”*
- *“Training and development of staff has had renewed vigour in the last few years and there has been considerable focus on ensuring access to training is transparent and available for all staff across the organisation”*

The report also highlighted some areas of development for the organisation:

- Ongoing communication – e.g. staff newsletter
- Encourage more cross-department working
- More team meetings, staff meetings and social activities
- Develop a set of Union management standards
- Consistency of line management relationships
- Recognition and reward scheme for staff

Next Steps

The Union’s SMT have found the framework a useful tool for focusing their efforts and identifying new initiatives. The external assessment has also been a very useful tool to ‘test’ the efficacy of the changes that have been made and a great opportunity to reflect on the improvements made.

There is a further meeting scheduled with our assessor that is an ‘Improvement Planning Meeting’ from which we will generate an action plan for where we go next. However it is expected that we will establish a new goal for achieving one of the three higher levels of IIP – bronze, silver or gold.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE REPORT

Imperial College Union

Presented by Anna Frith

Investors in People Practitioner

On behalf of Investors in People South of England

11th March 2015

Project No: 14-03337



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Introduction and Overview of the Organisation

This report represents feedback from the first assessment of Imperial College Union against the Investors in People Standard, which took place over 1.5 days in February 2015.

Imperial College Union is registered with the Charity Commission and the strategic aim of the Union is to be recognised by the College, membership and by external measures as providing a fundamental part of the student experience at the College.

In total, 17 interviews were held with a cross section of staff across the whole organisation. The Assessor would like to thank everyone who attended the interviews for their warm welcome and open and honest conversations. Thank you also to Laura Fellows for her help in planning this Assessment, for the kind hospitality shown and for helping to ensure the Assessment went smoothly.

The Assessor is delighted to confirm that sufficient evidence was identified to show that Imperial College Union meets the requirements of the Investors in People National Standard. The Improvement Planning Meeting will be used to expand on the continuous improvement sections in this report and to support the organisation in working towards Bronze, Silver or Gold in the future.

Investors in People Senior Specialist: [Anna Frith](#)
On behalf of: Investors in People South of England
Date: 11th March 2015

Executive Summary

Imperial College Union has a strong commitment to leading, managing and developing people as effectively as possible with a drive to continuously improve the performance of the organisation. Inspirational, supportive and high quality leadership is evident throughout the organisation which results in good engagement levels for the majority of staff. The majority of people are passionate about what they do and are proud to work for the Union. People enjoy the environment they work in and feel they make a positive difference to the performance of the Union.

The last three years has seen a transformation of the organisation including reforming the governance and registering as a Charity. The financial position of the Union has stabilised and an intelligent raft of people strategies has been introduced to support the development of the organisation. Structural changes are in the process of being rolled out and the feedback suggests communication and consultation surrounding these changes has been very thorough. Although the organisation is continuously evolving and introducing new ways of working, feedback from the majority of staff is extremely positive and there is a clear understanding of the vision that Imperial College Union is working towards.

This assessment confirmed the great work that the organisation has achieved in the development of its staff. A transparent approach offering equality of opportunities across the whole organisation is evident. Examples include a leadership development programme for all managers and further education courses. There is also a strong commitment to support people with their career and the feedback suggests pathways are created and training provided tailored to the individual. This investment in staff along with an empowering leadership style brings out the best in an ambitious team. As a result the team are thriving and working hard to improve the performance of the organisation.

Due to the on-going changes to the structure and continued improvements at a senior level, there is still work to be done in laying further foundations for the future and the suggestions provided throughout this report will support this.

Imperial College Union is to be congratulated on meeting the requirements of the Investors in People Standard and in the many achievements it has secured recently including becoming England's leading Student Union, the growth in student participation and overall the improved financial turnaround in the last three years. All of which have been enabled by excellent leadership, management and staff development.

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What Imperial College Union does really well:

- Imperial College Union has a very friendly, positive culture and people throughout the organisation enjoy working there and are loyal and dedicated. The senior team have developed a number of strategies to encourage good team work and to make the Union an enjoyable place to work.

“it’s a fun place to work but there is a lot more intent to what we are doing now, it feels a lot more purposeful.”

“People all get on well, it’s a sociable environment.”

- There are numerous strategies in place to ensure continuous improvement. These include team meetings, staff and student surveys, external assessments/accreditations that are used as a spring board for improvement. This assessment has found a number of improvements as a result of feedback.
- Management effectiveness is generally felt to be excellent with many of the qualities of ‘inspirational leaders’ who are motivational, passionate, and supportive; they listen a lot and involve everybody. People across the organisation describe the positive influence management has on the organisation and in their role. The management team have been taking part in a management development programme and many describe improved confidence and skills. This on-going development will continue to strengthen the leadership and management team.
- Training and development of staff has had renewed vigour in the last few years and there has been considerable focus on ensuring access to training is transparent and available for all staff across the organisation. A variety of opportunities have been provided to staff including specific courses/training related to their role, one to one coaching, qualifications/courses, networking etc.
- There are plenty of examples of staff developing their career in the organisation. Staff are provided with the training and support they need and provided with opportunities to take on additional responsibilities that enhance their knowledge and confidence.

Continuous Improvement Suggestions

- Due to the on-going changes taking place in the organisation, continue the excellent work in improving two way communication and cross team working. Examples could include:
 - Re-introduce the staff newsletter on a regular basis.
 - Encourage project teams with staff from different departments to encourage cross team working
 - Expand the number of all staff meetings, team meetings and social activities
 - Introduce technological communication channels e.g. yammer
 - Consider introducing pulse surveys. Short surveys surrounding particular themes e.g. stress, WLB, communication etc. This will provide quantitative data to measure engagement levels following improvements and investments in the organisation.

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- Although there is consistency in managers understanding what is expected of them in their role, this is based on the recent management training and Imperial College's management behaviours. Consider developing a set of behaviours with the management team specifically for the Union that reflect the future vision of the organisation.
- Review the format of the management meetings to ensure it is effective in meeting the needs of all managers.
- The PDRs appear to work well to develop SMART objectives and links between organisational goals and individual targets. Consider utilising this time to enable staff to have the opportunity to feed into how management can improve in the way they manage them. This will ensure managers are directly meeting the needs of their team and improving their practice as a result.
- Ensure the opportunity for people to meet monthly with their line manager is consistent across the whole organisation, regardless of their role. This will keep engagement and good communication consistent across the whole organisation.
- Imperial College Union places great importance on supporting staff to develop their career and there are a number of examples of people being promoted throughout the organisation. Consider further proactive approaches to career development to build on this good work. Suggestions to support this could include:
 - Introduce Personal Development Plans for all staff
 - Career Mapping Workshops
 - Career Coaching
 - Consider secondments for staff in other unions or organisations
 - Ensure there is clarity on access to professional development
- Consider developing a more formal recognition strategy that provides recognition to staff across the organisation. Consider a nominating peers scheme for going 'over and above' which raises awareness to the whole organisation of the hard work that some staff are involved in. The rewards could be non financial/vouchers but the value is also in the fact that the nominations are read by the senior team.
- Build on the supportive environment and work towards the Health and Wellbeing good practice award. Ideas to expand this area include:
 - Develop a Health and Wellbeing strategy for the Union to establish expected outcomes, benefits.
 - Introduce a survey to understand existing stress levels
 - Identify H&W champions across the organisation
 - H&W newsletter

Further discussion on the above suggestions will take place in the Improvement Planning Meeting.

Assessment Findings:**Setting Direction and Ethos through Organisational Strategy and Communication**

Imperial College Union vision is clearly understood by people in all areas and at all levels. People are aligned to this vision and this manifests in their sense of pride in working for the Union and their commitment to continually improving their own performance.

The vision of the Union is underpinned by an organisation plan and strategy that is developed on a three yearly basis. The operational plan is then revised and updated throughout the year using feedback from staff and other external sources e.g. students etc. People are very much involved in the development of this plan both at all staff meetings teams meetings and PDR's. It is evident this alignment of organisational goals with individual targets has improved considerably in recent years and there has been a strategic focus to improve this. There are KPIs to measure performance and the financial reporting for each team is an important measure of success. This focus for staff has significantly impacted on morale and providing a clear line of sight between what people do and the overall goals of the organisation. There are plenty of examples of people feeling more motivated as a result and feeling as if their potential is being realised.

Feedback surrounding communication of the organisational changes is mainly very positive. The majority of people feel there has been an open dialogue with plenty of opportunities to feed suggestions and challenge ideas. People are able to give examples of feedback that has been listened to and action taken. The majority of people feel communication works well internally within the Union with the all staff meetings, team meetings and individual one to ones. Generally staff feel that the open culture of the organisation means that feedback is received at the time it is needed rather than waiting for a formal meeting. A minority of staff would like to see this improve with the introduction of more all staff meetings and for some teams, more regular team meetings and the opportunity to understand more about other department activities. Ensure all teams have the opportunity to meet regularly and consider further opportunities for cross team communication and working. Consider improvements surrounding technology to keep people in touch with organisational activities. The introduction of pulse surveys at times throughout the year to measure effectiveness and engagement levels could be a consideration. **See continuous improvement suggestions.**

“Sometimes we don't work between teams very well”

The Union is clearly committed to continuous improvement and this is evidenced through the use of self assessment throughout. People are encouraged to develop their skills on an on-going basis and are well supported to continue learning either through supported courses of specific training related to their role. Staff surveys, student surveys, committees with a cross section of stakeholders, staff meetings and team meetings in addition to an open and approachable leadership style encourage suggestions and ideas to be put forward. The feedback suggests the Union has an open culture where people's views are valued and sought out which has led to high levels of morale across the team. There is a dynamic culture where innovative ideas are embraced and encouraged and people feel they can make a difference through their suggestions and ideas. There is plenty of evidence of the organisation improving its performance as a result of feedback from staff. One example is the Green Impact that became evident from the survey. Workshops and a team have now implemented a number of strategies to support this.

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Imperial College Union has a rigorous approach to strategic development with a clear cycle of planning, review, reflection and subsequent improvement. The organisation records and reviews data related to staff in a number of areas and assesses the effectiveness of these at a strategic level with the trustees in addition to senior management meetings. Metrics include staff absence levels, retention and engagement of staff levels through the staff survey.

Improved performance is seen through a number of measures including financial performance, student participation for example the current elections and positive student feedback in addition to improved staff engagement figures. Staff take great pride in their work and there is plenty of evidence of improvements to the organisation including improved student votes for this years elections. Other examples include the cleanliness of kitchens and increased speed of service. This is attributed to a number of factors including further training and development and a focus on working well as a team.

Engagement of staff and culture through effective Leadership and Management

Leadership at Imperial College Union is a great strength that has enabled the key successes recently. Feedback from staff regarding management effectiveness was consistently very positive, in particular the open and transparent leadership of the senior team sets a positive tone for aspiring managers in the organisation. People at all levels describe the positive influence the senior team have on the organisation and in their role.

“If I have a question they are always there to help me.”

“They are very supportive and approachable.”

“The all staff meetings keep us motivated and ambitious.”

Effective leadership and management of staff at Imperial College Union is described as being open, inclusive, listening to staff and being professional; all of which reflects the values of the union. The management behaviours used to measure performance of managers in the PDR meetings are from the College. These are effective in supporting and developing managers, however, the Union would benefit from developing their own set of behaviours in line with the future vision of the organisation. **See continuous improvement suggestions.**

“It’s a collaborative environment, we all work well together.”

Considerable emphasis has recently been placed on leadership development and the whole management team have attended a management development programme. This involves some tailored leadership coaching in addition to team training that includes how to develop SMART objectives as well as providing effective feedback to staff. Management meetings are used to update and support managers in addition to providing financial feedback on progress by team. A minority of managers suggest that although these meetings are useful there could be scope in expanding them to provide useful information to inform each team of current activities including positives and challenges which will support cross team working. **See continuous improvement suggestions.**

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Feedback from managers is very positive about their own development from the training and the one to one coaching provided by the senior team. Many leaders can describe how they have improved their skills as a leader.

The continued development of people throughout the organisation is also manifesting in the encouragement and empowerment given by the management team. Many staff describe taking on areas of responsibility and autonomy in their role. Supervisory training is also provided to managers in the organisation encouraging leadership skills throughout.

“Quite often I am left with the freedom to implement things in my own way”

The culture of recognition was generally felt to be very good, with personal thanks being made from the Managing Director and other members of the senior team. Day to day thanks is also part of the culture and staff describe how they all respect and thank each other on a regular basis. A minority of staff, particularly those affected by the recent changes feel recognition could be improved. The introduction of a recognition strategy will support this. **See continuous improvement suggestions.**

“We all receive birthday cards from the MD which is really nice.”

“I have found there is a good culture of saying thank you.”

Overall people in the organisation feel valued for the work they do and are very clear how their performance has a positive impact on the Union. People gave examples of social events paid for by the organisation when targets had been met including bowling and dinner. This is clearly appreciated by staff.

Building capability and improving job satisfaction through training and development

Imperial College Union has a culture where learning is valued, encouraged and actively supported. People in all roles across the organisation describe various examples of effective learning and development taking place and being applied in job roles including plenty of examples that support the key priorities of the Union.

There is an annual budget allocated to learning and development which includes the cost of external courses and trainers. In addition people are supported in their own professional development including qualifications, leadership training, ad-hoc training related to their role and other further education courses. The access to the college training and the online courses provide a wide and varied approach. People describe how their confidence has grown and the value they feel following the investment in them as individuals. A minority of staff would like further clarity on professional development and the opportunities for staff. **See continuous improvement suggestions.**

“There is more of a structured approach to training now.”

The annual staff development day is felt by the vast majority of people as informative and enjoyable and an excellent opportunity to bond with other teams. There is an enthusiasm in the Union of people wanting to

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get together as a whole staff team therefore the encouragement of more opportunities would benefit engagement even further. Although there is an ethos of sharing from the many team meetings and staff meetings, this good practice could be expanded with further opportunities to learn from each other. Consider a skills audit for all staff to establish individual strengths and to support internal training. **See *continuous improvement suggestions.***

Career development is clearly a strength and the feedback suggests people are able to discuss their long term aspirations even if they are outside of the Union and are provided with the support and development to achieve their goals. This is a forward thinking approach to motivating staff, particularly given the young and ambitious team at the Union but ensures there is a motivated and productive environment. Consider expanding this approach even further by offering sabbaticals and secondments. **See *continuous improvement suggestions.***

“They are keen to utilise talents while they are here.”

Feedback on the induction overall appears to be effective in helping people settle in their role. Suggestions to improve this include some people feeling they would like more emphasis on discussions with the Sabbatical Officers and others feeling a tour around the building at the time of interview would also be helpful.

The impact of learning and development is measured and evaluated at a strategic level through the team meetings, PDRs and senior management meetings. Areas for further development are also identified in this way.

Feedback from staff about the support offered by managers before and after training activity generally takes place in team meetings and PDRs at which time the sharing of learning is encouraged. People feel engaged and supported in their learning.

Imperial College Union’s approach to equality of opportunities is an excellent model of good practice which is borne out of staff testimony and the strategies in place. People feel there are equal opportunities for training and development and career progression. In addition part-time staff suggest they feel their individual needs are considered.

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Recommendation and next steps

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for Investors in People Specialists by Investors in People – United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills, the Investors in People Specialist is totally satisfied that Imperial College Union meets the requirements of the Investors in People National Standard.

Investors in People accreditation is granted indefinitely, with a proviso that an interaction is undertaken within 18 months of accreditation and a full assessment takes place no greater than 3 years apart. Assessments can be undertaken at any time and more frequent assessments are recommended to maintain levels of good practice and continuous improvement. The improvement Planning Meeting will be used to agree the strategy going forward.

Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire

Both the Investors in People Specialist and Investors in People South would welcome your feedback on this assessment and you will shortly be supplied with a Client Satisfaction Questionnaire from Investors in People to complete. Particular importance is placed on the feedback given by client organisations on Specialists; therefore we would very much appreciate it if you would complete the questionnaire.

Promoting continuous improvement

We support organisations at every stage of the Investors in People journey, helping them to realise the power of their people, optimise their performance and achieve their full potential. We see Investors in People as the People Partner for sustainable people solutions.

Please contact your Account Manager David Dennett, on 07930 311702 or email david.dennett@iipsouth.investorsinpeople.co.uk to find out more about Investors in People and how we can help your organisation.

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Outcomes table - evidence requirements framework matrix

Core Standard										
	Indicators									
ERs	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	
5	✓		✓						✓	
6	✓									
Wider Framework – Number of ERs Assessed – 6										
Number of ERs Met – 6										
	Indicators									
ERs	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
4	Core	Core	Core		Core				Core	
5	Core		Core						Core	
6	Core									
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