

DISCUSSION ABOUT STUDENT CONSULTATION RELATED TO DECISIONS AFFECTING THE STUDENT BODY

Proposer – Daniel Chipchase – President, Imperial Hub

Seconder – Marcus Bishop, 4th Year Student, Former Hub Committee Member

Union Notes

- Imperial Hub was an external organisation that is part of the national charity 'Student Hubs' and worked in partnership with Imperial College Union in the sector of social action volunteering and critical engagement in social and environmental issues. This ranged from highly successful conferences such as the Imperial International Development Conference and the London Climate Forum, to bespoke student-led volunteering schemes such as LinkAges and Schools Plus, which for the last few years have enjoyed massive success and acclaim from the student body, the College community and the wider community of Central London.
- As a result of a meeting with senior College management, the relationship was terminated by the Union Management over the summer, citing a lack of transparency and a breach of trust between the organisations, at a meeting of the Trustee Board (see Appendix One – Trustee Board Report excerpts). Furthermore, a lack of transparency was demonstrated by the Union's failure to follow its own guidelines. The Student Consultation Framework, produced by a former Union President, outlines the way in which the Union, or other department within college should conduct decisions which affect students. Based on this framework, a decision such as that made in the case of Imperial Hub, requires around 4 months of detailed consultation. In Imperial Hub's case, no student consultation was taken, which in addition to violating their guidelines, also meant that some incorrect information was used in the decision process.
- The Trustee Board admits that the departure of Imperial Hub's programmes, due to the Union's decision, will have a negative impact on the volunteering provision of the union in the short and medium term (see Appendix One – Trustee Board Report excerpts).
- In a series of interactions, as recorded by the Felix issues in the first two weeks of term, Imperial Hub's activities in engaging potential members as an external organisation have been significantly undermined by Union staff. Despite this support for the Hub continues to be strong. It is also noted that in meetings with several members of Hub committees, such as the London Climate Forum, the Union is actively assimilating the current and

former projects of Imperial Hub without clear and public recognition of the work that has been undertaken by Hub volunteers.

- In addition, Sabbatical Officers elected to the roles of President or Deputy President for Clubs and Societies for example, immediately sided with the Union Management's perspective of future provisions for volunteering opportunities at Imperial College rather than representing student views to them, whilst also making no statement in favour of expressing any opinion or reasoning for the decision, or their influence in it. As representative officers of the Student voice at Imperial, this is yet another failure of Union procedures.
- No mention of the end of the partnership with the Hub was made in either the first or second Council meeting minutes.
- The petition circulated by Hub volunteers has garnered the support of over 200 members of the College community, including students, staff and alumni of the College. Although inadequate for a special meeting of Council, this is a clear show of the mandate that we have to bring this issue to light and attempt to address it.

Union Believes

- There was a complete failure to consult any students about this decision, despite the existence of the student consultation framework. If this kind of decision could be made to Imperial Hub there seems to be nothing stopping the Union making decisions to cut other facilities such as academic reps or other officers without any consultation.
- The termination of the agreement with Student Hubs was not handled in accordance with the central principles of the Union Strategic Plan. The Union's aim to 'increase student volunteering in the outside world' will be compromised by the loss of the programmes offered by the Hub, as recognised by the Trustee Report in Appendix One.
- The money that has recently been claimed by the Union to expand volunteer provision would have been better invested in Imperial Hub programmes with a proven track record and a clear adherence to the Union's own values of student-centred volunteering in areas of social action. The Union has noted that it will be less able to provide the same services that the Imperial Hub staff, as the latter draws from years of experience in both professional and student involvement in social action projects.
- In light of the aforementioned points, The Hub questions how Union management and in particular Sabbatical officers could fail to realise the detrimental impact that this decision would make to the student experience. Moreover, given the fact the negative impact of this decision, on students is appreciated, it is not acceptable that union staff and

Sabbatical officers chose to represent their own interest over the interests of the general student body.

- The lack of mention of the termination of the relationship in Sabbatical Reports shows clear disregard for the impact that the action has had on the volunteering ecosystem at the Union.
- The approach to assimilate Imperial Hub projects under the Union portfolio without clear public recognition undertaken by management was not opposed by representative sabbatical officers. In addition, the absence of any student consultation prior to the termination of the partnership clearly violates the Union's Student Consultation Framework, and shows a disconnect between our representative student officers and the student body, as well as a deeper unwillingness to fulfil their role as student representatives. We believe that if this could happen to a student group like Imperial Hub is could happen to any student group, with students powerless to stop the Union Management making decisions without any consultation or student representation.

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Union Resolves

- There will be a news release that all students can easily read in a format other than a Committee paper from the Union staff relevant to the decision process. This should outline the Union's reasoning behind the decision. In addition, separately or in the same release Sabbatical Officers should contribute and comment on the decision, as well as explaining their reluctance to comment earlier.
- The Student Consultation Framework, one of the Union's documents, is frequently mentioned throughout and clearly outlines the level of consultation that should have been taken in this decision. However no consultation was conducted, nor was anyone held to account for this failure to consult. *Accountability needs to be established for this and similar future decisions (Who can be held accountable for this, and what will the council do) to ensure decisions of this severity cannot be made again (in future) without significant student consultation, (from the student body that the union relies on.)*
- It is required to investigate whether the responsibility for enforcing the Student Consultation Framework falls to Sabbatical Officers, and if so, why they did not complete their role in this case. Regardless of this, as it is part of the Sabbatical Officers' role of representing the student voice, it must be ensured that, in future, that Sabbatical Officers also seek student consultation in order to then give support either for or against a

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management decision, and to then publicly explain this position. As an elected representative figure this does not seem unreasonable.

Appendix One - please observe/attach the [Board of Trustee's Report from 24/09/2015, *Student Hubs and Student Development Update*](#)

Appendix Two - [Student Consultation Framework](#)