

Imperial College Union Communications Committee Report

Thursday 28th June 2018

AGENDA ITEM NO.	
TITLE	<i>Felix</i> Review – Editor’s Recommendations
AUTHOR	Fred Fyles – Felix Editor
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<i>Felix</i> Review was unfortunately not completed this academic year. Following discussion with Jarlath O’Hara I have taken the liberty of preparing this paper with recommendations generated from my own experience this year and discussions carried out at <i>Felix</i> Review meetings
PURPOSE	Committee members to note the report, advise on next steps, and give thoughts on recommendations included.
DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED	To note the report and establish recommendations for next year.

Background

Unfortunately, the *Felix* Review was not completed as per the research brief circulated at the beginning of the year. I do not believe continuing the review into a third academic year would be beneficial. To prevent the work of myself (FF), Andrew Keenan (AK), and Nick Burstow (NB) thus far going to waste I have made a number of recommendations for the future of *Felix*. In these recommendations, I am going off conversations had between myself, AK, and NB at *Felix* Review meetings, and my own experience this year as Editor-in-Chief of *Felix*.

Finances

AK was responsible for looking into the *Felix* finances, which he did. At the time of writing, I am not aware of whether the budget for next year has been approved. I do not have enough information about the financial model as a whole to generate recommendations, other than to say on my end it has largely worked.

This year I have had two main concerns over the finances of *Felix*, which were discussed with AK previously:

- *Uncertainty about Felix Budget:* Early on in the year, I had a number of questions about the money available for *Felix* which Matt Blackett (MB) and Tom Bacarese-Hamilton (TBH) were unable to answer, since they were not very involved with *Felix* finances. There were also other projects, e.g. *Phoenix* magazine, where I was unable to give those responsible adequate information about how much money was available within the *Felix* budget.
- *Lack of Advertisements Within Felix:* Throughout this year advertising revenue within *Felix* has been very poor (22 non-Union adverts across 29 issues, only three of which were from external companies). This has partly been because of the lack of an employee in the Sales and Sponsorship Manager Role, which has now been filled by Daz Martin (DM).

I would therefore make the following recommendations:

1. Involve the *Felix* Editor, and other key Union staff, more closely in the *Felix* budget, even if only on a purely informational level.
2. Arrange a meeting with the Marketing and Communications team, specifically DM, before the start of the next academic year to discuss strategy for adverts in *Felix*.

Relationship with Union

Another crucial aspect of the *Felix* Review was the relationship between the Union and the Editor, as well as general development/support for the Editor. This year I have noted two of the following challenges:

- *Lack of Communication with Staff:* Very few staff within the Union seem to be aware of how *Felix* works, what our editorial structure is, who the team is etc. This meant staff members were unaware of how to interact with *Felix*, which was particularly true of Officer Trustees.

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- *Lack of Support from Union:* Similarly, I felt I did not know who the different staff members were in the Union, and I didn't know who to go to with problems. This led me to go to AK with the majority of my concerns, which was not fair on either of us.

I would therefore make the following recommendations:

3. Ensure Union staff are aware of the editorial structure of *Felix*, with a particular emphasis on OT-*Felix* communication
4. Establish a session in handover explaining to incoming sabbatical officers what *Felix* is and how we can work together over the year
5. Ensure future *Felix* Editors are more aware of the different teams within the Union, and who it is appropriate to approach in different situations
6. Establish a regular support structure, e.g. regular 1:1 meetings with a designated member of senior management

Development and Support

Development of the *Felix* team and support available to the *Felix* team and the editor was another aspect of the *Felix* Review discussed in meetings. I noted the following challenges:

- *Handover Structure:* There was very little oversight within the handover process, and no documentation, which made it difficult for me to settle into the role.
- *Training Support:* This year I have been responsible for over 40 key volunteers and nearly 270 contributors overall, with no formal support in terms of training them. I have found offering training sessions difficult, since during term time the majority of my week is taken up with producing the paper.
- *Hardware Problems:* The West Basement, where the *Felix* Office is located, is not fit for purpose. This was demonstrated most acutely when the servers crashed, and I had to lay out three issues by myself on a single computer. However, since then we have faced further issues with the server dropping out, as well as problems with the InDesign licenses. A number of the computers are also getting on in age. There does not seem to be a consensus about whose responsibility the Basement is – this year it has fallen to Andy McLean, our Media Chair, but it is too much work for a single student volunteer.

I would therefore make the following recommendations:

7. Establish a formal structure for the handover period, to be decided by the outgoing *Felix* Editor, the incoming *Felix* Editor, and a Union staff member to provide oversight
8. Offer the *Felix* Editor support in developing training for their editorial team
9. Establish a West Basement Users Group (WBUG) to ensure continuing maintenance of the West Basement
10. Hire a part-time SysAdmin, responsible for the West Basement servers, who can provide formal documentation for the system

Appendix: Action Tracker

If all these recommendations are appropriate, I would suggest the following actions before the start of the next academic year:

1. Involve the *Felix* Editor, and other key Union staff, more closely in the *Felix* budget, even if only on a purely informational level.
 - a. Arrange a meeting between the incoming *Felix* Editor, DPFS, and DPCS, as well as a Union staff member, to discuss *Felix* finances.
 - b. Ensure *Felix* Editor has access to information about how much money is available to *Felix*, as well as weekly printing costs (as much information as is appropriate given *Felix*'s relationship with the Union)
2. Arrange a meeting with the Marketing and Communications team, specifically DM, before the start of the next academic year to discuss strategy for adverts in *Felix*.
 - a. Arrange a meeting as part of the handover process introducing the incoming *Felix* Editor to the Marketing and Communications team, to discuss advertising strategy.
3. Ensure Union staff are aware of the editorial structure of *Felix*, with a particular emphasis on OT-*Felix* communication
 - a. *Felix* Editor to create a brief introduction to the *Felix* editorial structure for Union staff, with information on what the structure is and how they can make use of *Felix*.
4. Establish a session in handover explaining to incoming sabbatical officers what *Felix* is and how we can work together over the year
 - a. Discuss with Emilie Helsen (EH) about when to establish a session during handover
 - b. Outgoing *Felix* Editor to deliver session
5. Ensure future *Felix* Editors are more aware of the different teams within the Union, and who it is appropriate to approach in different situations
 - a. Discuss with EH about what sessions are already in place to do this
 - b. If no session introducing the incoming *Felix* Editor to different teams within the Union exists, FF to meet with EH to discuss this possibility
6. Establish a regular support structure, e.g. regular 1:1 meetings with a designated member of senior management
 - a. *Felix* Editor to discuss with Jarlath O'Hara (JOH) the most appropriate support structure to establish next year
7. Establish a formal structure for the handover period, to be decided by the outgoing *Felix* Editor, the incoming *Felix* Editor, and a Union staff member to provide oversight
 - a. FF to discuss with incoming *Felix* Editor Andy Djaba (AD) what the aims of handover should be

- b. FF to deliver a formal proposal for handover to a Union staff member with documentation of what will be delivered during the handover period, to receive advice on proposal.
8. Offer the *Felix* Editor support in developing training for their editorial team
 - a. AD to meet with most appropriate Union staff member to discuss possibility of delivering training, and what support would be needed
9. Establish a West Basement Users Group (WBUG) to ensure continuing maintenance of the West Basement
 - a. NB: This is in progress, and is scheduled to be discussed at a CSP Board meeting after submission of this paper
 - b. Incoming DPCS to work with AD and other West Basement users to establish a WBUG
10. Hire a part-time SysAdmin, responsible for the West Basement servers, who can provide formal documentation for the system
 - a. Union staff member responsible for hiring – perhaps Charles Stewart – to meet with FF and Andy McLean to discuss technical requirements for the role
 - b. Union to begin process of establishing role