

Governance Review

Background

A review of the Union's democratic structures has been mentioned during Council meetings a number of times in the last few years, and gained greater support during last academic year's famed "Council quoracy crisis". Last year, when President-elect, I promised Council to conduct a governance review during my term of office. Despite every Council this year being quorate, I believe examining the reach, engagement and effectiveness of our democratic structures still to be a valuable and important exercise. Firstly, it will allow us to understand the current successes and shortcomings of our democracy, which in turn will allow us to improve our reach all members a priority in *Our Strategy 2017-2020*. Secondly, as constitutionally required, we will be set to re-examine the Union's Constitution & Bye-Laws by 30th October 2017 and I believe it is best to do so following a comprehensive review.

Some work examining our democratic structures has already been conducted (i.e. the Officer Trustee Role Review) and some is ongoing (i.e. Council Reform Working Group, Wellbeing Rep Network). Therefore, it is not our intention to redo these, however, we will look to capture the information and learnings of these activities.

Section A

Aims

The purpose of the review would be to answer these three main questions:

1. **Reach** - Do we represent all of our members?
2. **Engagement** - Do we have decision making bodies that engage the membership well?
3. **Efficacy** - Are our democratic structures effective at running the organisation?

Scope

Since the last Constitution was created, various specific issues have been raised which we would hope the Democracy review would address. It would be suggested at this stage that the following areas should be explicitly within the scope of the review:

- The remit, jurisdiction and primacy of decision-making bodies.
- Constitution and Bye-Laws – their rigor and comprehensiveness.
- The role of technology:
 - Communication of the day-to-day democratic process and information.
 - Online/ Social Media Polls – their purpose and whether they are binding or advisory.
 - The criteria required to create a poll or consult the wider membership.
- Representative structures of PG students, business school students and non-SK students.
- Liberation Officers and Campaigns.
- Disciplinary procedures.
- The role of Union staff support and advice.
- Methods of evaluating our democracy at every level of the Union (from Rep level up to Board).

Out of Scope

It is also not practical or necessary to review all aspects of the Union, below are suggestions for areas to be beyond the scope of this review:

- Officer Trustee Responsibilities (already completed) – Although a full examination of the wording in Constitution and Bye-Laws should occur.
- CSP or CU Committees outside of the current Constitution/Bye-Laws – right to self-determination.
- Management Groups (ongoing) – non-representative aspects (e.g. Claims approval process).
- Structure or responsibilities of Trustee Board (prescribed by charity law).
- Well-being Reps (this will be done in parallel with the review, but on an accelerated timeline).

Governance Review Paper

Proposer: Nas Andriopoulos, President

Seconded: Tim Seers, Student Trustee 2016-17

Union notes that:

1. The current Constitution & Bye-Laws will expire on 30th October 2017.
2. Democratic and Inclusive are two of the Union's organisational values as outlined in *Our Strategy 2017-20*.
3. Any Constitution & Bye-Law changes need to be approved jointly by two thirds of a quorate Union Council, the Board of Trustees and College Council.

The Union believes that:

4. A strong, inclusive democracy is fundamental to the function of Imperial College Union.
5. It is not desirable, nor good governance, to exist for a period without a valid Constitution & Bye-Laws.
6. Any new draft Constitution and Bye-Laws should be presented to Council for discussion and decision during this academic year to minimise the chance that (5) occurs.
7. That understanding our membership and consulting widely will be a prerequisite to the success of the review.

The Union resolves to:

8. Review its democratic activity.
9. Form a cross-function steering group to direct and author the review. The steering group shall:
 - a. Have the following membership:
 - i. At least five members of Council, preferably including two CU Presidents
 - ii. All Officer Trustees
 - iii. Members of the Governance sub-committee of the Board of Trustees
 - b. Be chaired by the Union President. The chair shall:
 - i. Be responsible for coordinating the work of the group.
 - ii. Submit a progress report back to the Council at every meeting until the review is complete.
 - c. Decide the final scope and aims of the review, based on the recommendations stated in Section A.
 - d. Produce and make public the scope, aims and timeline of the review at the earliest opportunity.
 - e. Consult stakeholders including: current members, lifetime members, College and external resources, as it sees fit.
 - f. Delegate actions to working-groups and Officers as it sees fit.
 - g. Return the review and recommendations to Council by the May Council.
 - h. Draft a new Constitution & Bye-Laws to be presented to Council by the end of the academic year.