

Union Council – Governance decisions

Introduction

The agenda of the 23 January meeting of Union Council has several papers proposing changes and initiatives that relate to the responsibilities of the Governance Committee. Almost all of these proposals have been generated as spin-outs from the ongoing Governance Review and preparations for the Leadership Elections.

The changes, their rationales and their relevance to *Our Strategy* are explained below. A verbal update will be given at the Governance Committee meeting about the outcome of the Union Council meeting.

Changes to Constituent Union Constitutions

Developing our Constituent Unions is highlighted throughout *Our Strategy* and *Our Plan* as a priority for 2017/18, and this year so far has seen a rapid increase in the direct contact and support offered to Constituent Union Presidents by ICU staff. Most of this support has been in the form of regular 121 meetings between each President, and me.

These discussions have been focused on supporting CU Presidents to move beyond the day-to-day operations of their CU and give them a framework for establishing long-term priorities. Each CU has started from a different point and each has different specific objectives, but broadly our conversations have had two main themes:

1. Generating strategic plans for each CU involving long-term planning, stakeholder consultation, and drawing up CU-specific values, priorities and responsibilities.
2. Reforming their Committee to make it more effective and manageable, with a better distribution of responsibilities and hierarchy

So far, these discussions have borne the following fruit:

CU	Constitution	Strategy
GSU	Minor constitutional changes agreed internally and proposed to Union Council (low-level committee changes not relevant to Leadership Elections)	Strategic plan published and disseminated to students; already shaping relationship with Graduate School and planning for 2018/19
ICSMSU	Constitutional changes to Executive agreed internally and proposed to Union Council	Working draft of ICSMSU Strategic Plan already in consultation and positively influencing Faculty of Medicine planning around maintaining student satisfaction throughout upcoming expansion numbers
RCSU	Constitutional changes to Executive agreed internally and proposed to Union Council	Partial working drafts of RCSU Strategic Plan 2020 already in circulation within Executive
CGCU	Constitutional changes to Executive agreed internally and proposed to Union Council	Outline strategic priorities under discussion
RSMU	Minor constitutional changes agreed internally and proposed to Union Council (low-level committee changes not relevant to Leadership Elections)	Outline strategic priorities under discussion
Silwood	Out of scope for this process due to size and lack of exposure to Leadership Elections	

Officer Trustee Role Descriptions

Collaboratively, the Officer Trustees proposed minor changes to their role descriptions as set out in the Bye-Laws. In summary:

- Responsibility for Student Development no longer solely with the DPFS, but shared across all five
- Responsibility for Health & Safety procedures more explicitly allocated to DPFS
- Responsibility for CSPs more effectively shared between DPCS and DPFS
- Responsibility for marketing & communication explicitly allocated to Union President

Liberation Officer Role Descriptions

Changes were proposed to the naming of what the Constitution & Bye-laws call the Union Welfare Officers, which have been called Liberation Officers in our student-facing communications for the past few years.

- Union Welfare Officers now known as Liberation & Community Officers
 - o To reflect best practice in the sector (Liberation) and to reflect that some roles represent communities that are not necessarily protected classes or conventional liberation groups (environmental, interfaith, mental health).
- Black, Minorities & Ethnic Officer renamed to Black & Minority Ethnic Officer
 - o To reflect best practice
- Campaigns Officer role removed
 - o By recommendation of the Liberation Review and agreement of roleholders in previous years

Separately, the current Mental Health Officer submitted a paper proposing the creation of a “Working Class and Social Mobility Officer” role. While this was not directly called for in the Liberation Review or as an Officer Trustee priority, it is a role that has been introduced in a small number of peer SUs. If Council agrees to create this role, the Education & Welfare Team will endeavour to support it.

Next steps

All of these proposals are time-sensitive, as to elect students to reformed CU, Liberation and Officer Trustee roles in March 2018, these proposals must pass at the 23 January Union Council or the deadline for the opening of nominations on 31 January will be missed.

By the time the Governance Committee meets, the outcome of all the proposals should be known and any operational steps necessary to enact them will be underway.

I believe it would be useful for the Governance Committee to reflect on how this Union Council meeting represents two important projects beginning to produce concrete and specific changes in time for the first half of 2018 and the 2018/19 academic year. I would welcome a discussion of how Governance Committee can support the development of Constituent Union strategies and help embed and evaluate the reformed Liberation Officer and Officer Trustee roles.