



**Imperial College Union Communications Committee**  
**29 January 2019**

<b>AGENDA ITEM NO.</b>	6
<b>TITLE</b>	Leadership Elections Review Actions
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Keriann Lee, Head of Student Voice & Communications
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<p>The project management plan for LE19 includes actions to address the findings of the LE Review conducted after the 2018 poll, with the following recommendations addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There must be a Project Manager who is a Senior Manager and who is not responsible for the administrative tasks. There must therefore be an assigned, appropriate administrative support function.</li> <li>• There must be clearly communicated objectives regarding the success of the elections with measures beyond turnout alone.</li> <li>• There must be a process from start to finish of the elections which is managed by the PM with oversight through Governance Sub-Committee.</li> <li>• The timetable must be set six months in advance.</li> <li>• Events with student dependencies must be confirmed six months in advance with clear expectations and support mechanisms in place.</li> <li>• Training sessions and materials must be devised with support for DROs that is more extensive than "ask the PM".</li> <li>• There must be a communication method devised which is not the responsibility of the Deputy Returning Officers to communicate with candidates during the election.</li> <li>• Performance management measures must be utilised to address recent and any future failings in fulfilling staff responsibilities.</li> </ul>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	For the committee to review the measures which have been put in place to address the adverse findings of the LE18 Review
<b>DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED</b>	To decide whether the responses to the findings are adequate to proceed with the project management of LE19.

## **Introduction**

The Leadership Elections not only play a critical role in maintaining the Union's democratic structures and are a mandatory exercise, but it's the most prominent communications campaign conducted annually by the Union. It is therefore a high-risk activity with reputational and governance consequences for the Union if not properly managed.

The 2018 Leadership Elections were subject to a review following poor performance in its project management and disaffection among students. The findings were published to this committee by the Union's Managing Director with recommendations for future exercises adopted.

In keeping with the requirement that the Board of Trustees should have oversight of these elections through its relevant sub-committees, and in anticipation of another such election, this paper seeks to outline the steps which have been or are being taken to address the findings of the 2018 review in the project management of LE19.

## **2018 Findings / LE19 Actions**

Below are specific responses to the *Findings* which informed the *Recommendations*, including what actions have been, or are being taken to address them for LE19.

### **1.**

#### **Review:**

*There was insufficient separation between accountability and responsibility. The project lead took too many administrative tasks which were then not completed as/when required.*

**LE19:** Each area of responsibility for the elections has been identified and organised in a matrix which clearly identifies who is accountable, who is responsible, who should be consulted or merely informed. The matrix identifies the Head of Student Voice & Communications (HoSVC) as accountable for all tasks, but reduces that role's responsibility for specific task deliveries. This frees the HoSVC to act as a project manager shaping and directing the activities towards the desired objectives. Without a Marketing & Communications Manager, the project manager will still have to undertake a lot of communications related tasks which will undermine this. However, this is offset by the fact that the branding and other printed mass communications will not change this year making the production aspect of the campaign less onerous. There is also an additional marketing coordinator in the Marketing Team to offset pressures.

In addition, administrative support has been identified within the Union to provide support during the period of the elections. The Student Development Project Coordinator has been reassigned to the Elections Team for the duration of the project.

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### **2.**

#### **Review:**

*The Elections Team was inadequately administered; participants should have been better supported to understand their specific allocated tasks.*

**LE19:**

The RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted, informed) matrix was devised with all senior members of the Elections Team, so there is both knowledge and consensus of who is responsible for specific tasks. The matrix is used as the basis for meetings with notes updated within the matrix. There is follow up by the PM outside of meetings on specific tasks among different work streams with the stipulation that the project manager be involved in all subgroups.

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**3.****Review:**

*The new timetable was inadequately implemented, leading to occasional confusion within the Elections Team and widespread confusion amongst candidates.*

**LE19:**

The bye-laws require notification of major elections five clear College days before nominations and extensive discussions have been had around the timetable well before then, with all views and considerations allowed to contend before they were finalised. This began six months ahead of the expected start of nominations. Having had widespread feedback, taking into account the findings of the *Review* and previous concerns from students, candidates and OTs, the opportunity for confusion has been lessened as discussions have been exhausted in the appropriate forums before mass communication to students. The Elections Team were also part of the discussions around date changes so will not be caught off guard by changes which have now been fixed ahead of the required announcement.

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**4.****Review:**

*There was poor communication with media groups, including Felix and ICTV, reducing the quality of the Live Debates and risking the coverage within three Felix issues.*

**LE19:**

All three relevant media societies: ICTV, IC Radio, and Felix have already been engaged and committed to hosting the event and providing coverage including front page prominence for key dates. ICTV and IC radio will both host the debate in Metric with a live audience, providing the full set up and asking questions which should make the event student-centred. They will also host a live stream on FB with access to the main Union account. The Project Manager agreed with the media groups that the Election Team will provide promotion, curation of some questions from students following the close of nominations, limited and embargoed access to manifestos 24 hours ahead of the debate so questions can be formulated, along with any reasonable budgetary requirements.

**5.****Review**

*There were errors in election materials, primarily an offensive error being made with regards to the name of the Disabilities Officer position.*

**LE19:**

Copy editing is a critical function of all communications processes since writers generally find it challenging to notice their own errors. It's therefore standard protocol that another competent pair of eyes or more, look over any printed material, particularly if voluminous. The 2018 Project Manager acted as the copy editor but did not catch the error and due to the time constraints which beset the project, it did not enjoy wide enough distribution inhouse before printing deadline. This year, all printed material, as is standard for items like Impact and Annual Reports and Welcome handbooks will be widely reviewed to increase the odds of noticing errors which are almost always contained in initial drafts.

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**6.****Review**

*There was inadequate communication of the work of the DROs, leading to a perception that rules were being enforced unevenly and without transparency.*

**LE19:**

The complaints procedure is being mapped to ensure it flows well for students, with revisions to the form, and plans for a web page where daily reports will be posted on the types of complaints received that day, the rules which relate to those complaints, along with a general resolutions report. This should help clarify the rules and provide transparency without violating any issues of confidence which was partly the basis for the previous opacity. Individual complainants will also receive an email as a basic guarantee.

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**7.****Review**

*The volume of communications work for DROs on top of the decision-making remit is too great for additional responsibilities to their existing roles.*

**LE19:**

The Project Coordinator who has been reassigned to provide administrative support will, during the period of voting, spend all her time monitoring the elections inbox and the complaints, feeding issues to the DROs for resolution, and communicating decisions to candidates through the complaints process, with supervision. This should reduce the burden on DROs.

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**8.****Review**

*Candidate Briefing and training sessions were poorly communicated and therefore poorly attended.*

**LE19:**

The Head of Student Experience along with the Student Development Manager will be responsible, for the first time, for ascertaining the learning and development needs of

candidates and devising appropriate training material. They will deliver online and drop in sessions during the nominations period on *Writing Manifestos* and *Inclusive Campaigns*, while the Candidate’s Briefing just before campaigning will still be conducted by the HoSVC and DROs since that session will explore election rules and questions around the election itself. The dates for the briefings will be communicated at the start of the nomination period and will have as much exposure as the debate and results party. It will also be communicated at the point of nomination so candidates know what to expect immediately.

**9.  
Review**

*There was a lack of success measures for the elections cycle other than turnout.*

**LE19:**

The success measures for this election were agreed previously and includes metrics around increased nominations per role, increased diversity of candidates, as well as more PG engagement.

**Communications-specific Recommendations:**

The *2018 Review* made communications related recommendations but did not outline its findings. The recommendations have been addressed below.

Recommendation	2019 actions
<p>Begin election planning next year with a thorough discussion of what the aims of communication should be, ensuring all communications from the Union are in accord with these aims.</p>	<p>The aims have been identified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity of candidates and voters in keeping with Imperial demographics;</li> <li>• Maintain and grow PG gains made during AE18</li> <li>• Ensure more motivated and informed candidates who understand the job and can run on realistic platforms through realistic and detailed role descriptions.</li> <li>• Rehabilitating the Union’s reputation around elections and re-inspiring trust.</li> </ul>
<p>Put in place a form of structured oversight for communications, ensuring sub-editing (<i>sic</i>) is standard protocol.</p>	<p>Already in place and is standard protocol for communications material in the Union. LE18 error was due to insufficient (<i>only the PM rather than a wider pool</i>) and rushed (<i>need to print quickly due to poor planning</i>) copy-editing, rather than a lack of it.</p>

<p>Put in place a set timeline at the beginning of the planning process, and do not change it beyond a certain date, e.g. end of Winter term.</p>	<p>This was done this year with discussion of LE dates, metrics, and ways to address the findings of the review starting in the summer of the current academic year.</p>
<p>Ensure the timeline for LEs does not clash with other campaigns, prioritising the LEs wherever possible.</p>	<p>Because the elections are two months long in a busy term, it is difficult to not have any clashes, but LE will always be prioritised and dates of other campaigns have been adjusted accordingly. There is no other major campaign for the voting period.</p>
<p>Improve coverage to non-SK campuses, with both publicity material and staff support available.</p>	<p>This was a major weakness of last year's campaign and will be corrected with deeper engagement which has already started with outreach to Silwood, White City, Hammersmith, and Charing Cross as well as residences. Publicity material will also be taken to those campuses.</p>
<p>For each aspect of the communication strategy, identify which stakeholders need to be involved, when they should be contacted, and by whom.</p>	<p>This will be tightly coordinated by the Comms Team. Email is the highest performing channel in this campaign and too many people having responsibility made accountability and coordination difficult in LE18. Email titles and language sent did not adhere to the established campaign messaging, messages were too long with no tracking of open and click through rates, and the best practice around timing of emails were not adhered to because too many people were sending them.</p>
<p>Offer a space on the elections working group to at least one OT as standard.</p>	<p>The President co-chairs the Elections WG but will have to recuse should he develop interest in running, as in previous years. It is not considered good practice for potential candidates to be involved in the project team directly administering the election as this could appear to be an unfair advantage and is a reputational risk for the Union. OTs have direct election oversight at Board sub-committees and Council, where rules and other key decisions are made, as well as updates throughout the project.</p>

**Recommendation:**

That the Committee approve the actions outlined in addressing the findings of the Elections 2018 Review for the LE19 exercise, which will be conducted over the following time period:

12:00, Monday 4 February - **Nominations open and online training**

12:00, Friday 1 March – **Nominations close and online training**

14:00, Tuesday 5 March - **Manifestos due**

12:15, Wednesday 6 March – **Candidates' Briefing**

13:00, Wednesday 6 March - **Campaigning begins and manifestos go live online**

17:00 – 20:00, Wednesday 6 March - **ICTV and Radio Debate (Meet the Candidates)**

07:00, Friday 8 March – **Felix publishes manifestos and leads with elections**

12:00, Monday 11 March – **Voting opens**

14:00, Thursday 14 March – **Voting closes**

10:00, Friday 15 March – **Complaints deadline**

19:00, Friday 15 March - **Results Party**