

**Imperial College Union  
Board of Trustees / 18 November 2020**

**External Trustee Recruitment Pack**

Author(s): Dr Tom Flynn (Managing Director)  
Abhijay Sood (Union President)  
Victoria Agbontaen (Governance Officer)

Purpose: To consider the information pack for upcoming recruitment of two lay trustees, and a new Chair of the Board.

**1. Summary**

The Union will need to recruit three new external members for the Board between now and 31 July 2021, including a new Chair.

A skills audit has been undertaken of the current lay trustees, with a range of key competencies identified that should be prioritised in this recruitment process.

# JOIN US.

**WE'RE  
RECRUITING  
THREE NEW  
TRUSTEES.**

## **WELCOME**

Thank you for your interest in joining Imperial College Union as one of our lay trustees. We are currently recruiting for three new individuals to join us – one of whom will become our new Chair of the Board from August 2021.

This is an exciting time for the organisation, as we are at the start of a long-term transformation project to significantly improve the impact we have on our members – students at Imperial College London. We are a registered charity and one of the oldest students' unions in the UK, with a significant history and tradition. Our students are amongst the most talented and active within the sector and are engaged in activities and projects that make a huge contribution to the life of the College.

Being a trustee in a students' union shares many of the features that you'd expect with being a trustee of any other charity. You will join a Board that is responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation, working with staff to develop plans and activities that deliver our charitable purpose: the advancement of education for students at Imperial College London.

But there are also some key differences. We are a democratic organisation, which means you'll get to work alongside students and student representatives in all of our work. You'll be asked to mentor and help guide these individuals in their own leadership journeys, drawing upon your own experience and knowledge. Students' unions are some of the most exciting and dynamic charities within the sector – and we're really looking for individuals who will embrace that.

We've outlined a lot more information in the pack below, but if you'd like a conversation with either of us, please don't hesitate to contact us via the following:

Victoria Agbontaen  
Governance Officer  
[icu.board@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:icu.board@imperial.ac.uk)

Best Wishes

**Abhijay Sood**  
Union President

**Dr Tom Flynn**  
Managing Director

## ABOUT US

The Union is a student-led, democratically run charity with elected representatives who sit on Union committees, direct Union resources, and represent the views of students to the College and external bodies. The Union is led by student officers who act as representatives to the 18,000+ members. The most senior officers are the five sabbatical officers who work full-time for the Union on a variety of areas ranging from commercial services to campaigns and representation. These officers are supported by around 50 full-time and 150 part time staff, and the elected officers of the Union's various clubs and societies.

The objective of Imperial College Union is to have a positive impact on the experience and outcomes of all Imperial College students from all backgrounds. The way positive impact is delivered is through a combination of service provision and advocating for students.

Every year, over 2,000 students are elected to volunteer roles – from Club, Society & Project Committee members, to Liberation and Campaign Officers, to Academic Representatives, Council Members and more. Union Council meets several times every term to debate matters and create campaigns on issues important to Imperial's students, such as tuition fees, employability, mental health, housing and much more.

Imperial College Union also operates to the highest standards of charity governance, professional management, and leadership. Our Board of Trustees makes strategic decisions about the Union's long-term future with more than half of its members being students and the other Trustees being individuals that are highly experienced in governance, charity law and both professional and personal development.

### Our Future

The Union has had a long, varied history over nearly 100 years, but the last 18 months have been especially challenging. The Union is currently in the middle of a period of turnaround and transformation with a new strategic plan and operating model currently in development. Nonetheless, the Union has a promising future. The positive relationship that the Union maintains with the College creates a shared ambition for an effective and high performing organisation, and they have made it clear they are willing to support us with time, expertise and resources when required. Similarly, the recruitment and appointment of a brand-new Senior Management Team over the past 12 months will help ensure our long-term transformation to a successful future for the Union.

### Our Board of Trustees

As with all charities, the Board of Trustees is the most senior governing body of Imperial College Union. It provides the strategic direction of the organisation by ensuring that we are working towards our vision and ensures that our staff and student leaders are conducting their activities safely and legally.

The membership of the Board of Trustees is a mix of elected students (including the Officer Trustees), appointed students, and trustees drawn from outside of our student body. These 'lay trustees' are selected from industry and academia, for their expertise and experience and their external perspective. One of these lay trustees also takes the role of Chair of the Board.

The charity's Board currently has 16 trustees, three of whom (all lay trustees) will retire from the Board this year. New Trustees are appointed by the existing members of the Board with each trustee will also be a member of the charitable company. When filling vacancies, the Board takes into account the skills, knowledge and experience needed to maintain the Board's ability to direct effectively the full range of the charity's activities.

All new Trustees will receive an induction to help them fully understand the nature of the Union, its purpose and objectives, and to explain the roles and responsibilities of what it entails. Training and development resources are also available.

The Board officially meets six times a year and is supported by a number of different subcommittees, which are currently being reviewed.

### **Skills We're Looking For**

We have recently undertaken a skills audit of the Board and have identified a number of core experiences / competencies that we are keen to recruit. We are open about where these might have been developed and are not necessarily looking for individuals with decades and decade's worth of experience. What matters most to us is your expertise, willingness to become part of our team, and motivation to really deliver for Imperial College students.

- i. Sector knowledge: we're keen to attract candidates with experience of working within the charity sector, particularly within education, membership or youth organisations. This is particularly crucial for the role of Chair, where we'd be keen to recruit an individual with experience of mentoring young leaders. In addition to this, we would hope to appoint at least one lay trustee in this recruitment round with some experience of students' unions, as we look to re-engage with the wider sector.
- ii. Governance and charity law: due to the nature of our Board (where most Trustees only serve one year), we are keen to attract candidates with knowledge (or a willingness to learn) of English and Welsh charity law. Again, we are completely open about where this knowledge might have been developed.
- iii. Human resources: we have a complex arrangement for our employment procedures (which we are currently reviewing). A trustee with experience in HR law and/or people development would be extremely beneficial for the Board, as we undertake this work and look to build a high performing organisation.
- iv. Media and crisis communications: we are a relatively high-profile organisation, and we often attract media stories – both good and bad! Having experience on the Board of dealing with the media (and more generally crisis communication experience) would be an advantage for any potential applicant.

Because we are recruiting for three roles in this round, we also want to make it clear that we are going into this process with an open mind – and will consider candidates from all backgrounds and with all experiences.

## **CHAIR OF TRUSTEES (ONE POST)**

Thank you for your interest in the role of Trustee at Imperial College Union. Welcome to imperial College Union and I am delighted that you are interested in applying for the role of Chair of the Board of Trustees/

Given the mission of Imperial College is to achieve enduring excellence in research and education in science, engineering, medicine and business for the benefit of society, we believe that our purpose as the Union is to ensure that each student's time at Imperial College is the best it can be for our 18,000+ members and they are at the heart of everything that we do. A vital and challenging role.

As Chair of the board you will have the privilege of dealing with some of the brightest minds across the university sector as well as the high performing senior leadership team of Imperial College. The combination of lay trustees, elected students and elected officers creates a stimulating and invigorating environment which has to meet the demands of its bright students, maintain its democratic mandate, manage its finances and continue to evolve the Union as a leading body for its membership.

The annual turnover of elected Board members adds another dimension to Chairing; new trustees bring a constant succession of initiatives and high levels of ambition whilst our lay trustees maintain stability and strategic direction, all of which keep the Board energised, fresh and demanding!

Chair of the Board of Imperial College Union is a unique role, a stimulating challenge, and an absolute privilege, responsible for representing 18000+ students in one of the most foremost higher education institutions in the world. I wish you success in your application.

Regards  
Jill Finney  
Chair of Trustees

### **Chair Role Description**

As part of the Imperial College Union Chair of the Board of Trustees, you will be responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity. This includes ensuring the charity has a clear vision, ensuring financial stability and compliance with relevant governing documents, laws & regulatory guidelines:

### **Role Responsibilities**

No list is exhaustive, and anyone who has worked within charities knows that context and circumstances can change radically. However, alongside the wider responsibilities you would take on as a trustee, we have identified four specific duties are particularly important for the individual taking on the Chair post.

#### Providing leadership for the whole Board

The Chair will need to be a leader who keeps full board focused on the organization's mission, vision, and strategic direction, and ensure that it fulfils its responsibilities for the governance of the organisation.

#### Agendas and Meeting Management

The Chair will need to work collaboratively with the Managing Director, the Union President and other key staff to establish and manage meeting agendas. The agenda provides structure for the meeting, helps the Chair to control the meeting efficiently, and moves the board towards decision making.

### Board Conduct

The Chair will need to set a positive, energized tone for board meetings. By modelling, articulating, and upholding the code of conduct that are outlined in the by-laws, the Chair must set a high standard for board conduct. The Chair should also take the lead in addressing issues regarding confidentiality, conflict of interest, and other pertinent board policies.

### Managing Director Relationship

The Chair should work in partnership with the Managing Director and Union President, sharing a common understanding of the organisation's goals and strategies. The Chair should also ensure that effective and productive relationships exist between the Board and all stakeholders.

## **LAY TRUSTEES (TWO POSTS)**

As part of being a trustee for Imperial College Union, you will be responsible for acting together with other members of the Board, governing the charity, safeguarding its assets, and applying them as efficiently and effectively as possible to further the charity's objectives as set out in its governing documents.

### **Role Responsibilities:**

No list is exhaustive, and anyone who has worked within charities knows that context and circumstances can change radically. However, alongside the general duties you would take on as a trustee, we have identified five specific duties that are particularly important in light of our organisation at this moment in time

#### Strategy and long-term sustainability

Trustees should work with our Managing Director and senior team to develop, agree and monitor goals and objectives, and to assess whether the strategy to achieve them is reasonable in relation to the risks involved. Lay trustees need to be particularly focussed on the long-term picture, monitoring trends over a three-year period.

#### Governance and charity law

Trustees should ensure that the organisation complies with its governing document, charity law, and any other relevant legislation or regulations. Trustees should also ensure that all the charity's activities are within its objects, the law and relevant regulations.

#### Financial oversight

Trustees should define the parameters of the organisation's annual budget and monitor financial performance. This is particularly important as the organisation looks to rebuild and develop a new operating model over the coming years.

#### Supporting young trustees

Lay trustees within Imperial College Union play a particularly important role in mentoring and coaching young trustees. The ability to empathise and guide is critical.

#### Acting as an ambassador

Trustees should safeguard the charity's ethos, its good name, and the values of the organisation. Lay trustees will be required to act in various ambassadorial roles for the organisation, often working alongside elected student leaders. The ability to articulate our purpose and impact in appropriate language is crucial.

### **General Duties of Trustees**

- Identify with and be motivated by the values and objectives of Imperial College Union.
- Think critically, independently, and strategically.
- Speak your mind in a constructive manner, demonstrating a strategic and supportive style.
- Act in the best interests of the present and future beneficiaries, setting aside and declaring any other interests you may have.
- Devote the necessary time and effort to reading and scrutinising papers, leading discussions and undertaking other preparatory work.
- Work collaboratively with fellow trustees and senior staff, contributing effectively, and providing advice and guidance on new initiatives.
- Demonstrate the seven Nolan principles of public life in all settings: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

## OTHER DETAILS

### Terms & Appointment

Trustees will serve an initial three-year term to be eligible for re-appointment for two additional terms of three years each. They will need to be ratified by both the Board of Trustees and a vote of our (all-student) Union Council.

### Remuneration & Expenses

The role of Trustee is unremunerated, however travel expenses directly incurred in the role as Trustee on official business can be reimbursed.

### Time Commitment

Up to six official Board meetings per year, with three to four additional subcommittee meetings per year, averaging out at approximately one meeting per month.

### Location of Meetings

Due to current government guidelines around Covid-19, all meetings are currently being held remotely until further notice. Once staff are allowed on campus meetings, we will operate with a blended model, with physical meetings held at the following address:

Imperial College Union  
Beit Quadrangle,  
Prince Consort Road,  
London,  
SW7 2BB

### Application Details

To express an interest in the role and to be considered, please submit the following:

- A detailed and up-to-date CV (maximum two pages).
- A supporting statement that sets out your motivation for applying, and the skills and experiences you are able to bring to the Board (maximum two pages) .
- Details of your availability on the dates provided in the indicative timetable.

Completed expressions of interest should be submitted to: [icu.board@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:icu.board@imperial.ac.uk)

Please also ensure you have also completed and submitted the equal opportunities monitoring form provided on this site. The information on the form will be treated as confidential and used for statistical purposes only. The form will not be treated as part of your application.

The closing date for applications for all roles is Monday 4 Jan at 9am.

If you have any queries about any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information or wish to have an informal and confidential discussion about the opportunity then please contact Victoria Agbontaen, the Governance Officer at [icu.board@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:icu.board@imperial.ac.uk).

### Equal Opportunities

Imperial College Union is fully committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in our workforce and employment practices, in the work we undertake, and in the provision of all our services. We therefore expect all of Imperial College Union Trustees and staff to be willing and able to make a positive contribution to the promotion and implementation of Equality and Diversity policy.

**Recruitment Timetable**

A recruitment timetable for candidates is provided below.

4 Jan 2021 (9am)	Deadline for applications:
w/c 4 Jan 2021	Shortlisting of Candidates
w/c 11 Jan 2021	Final Selection Panel Interviews