

**Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 23 June 2021**

Staff Return to Campus [Post Pandemic]

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Purpose: To consider the Union's plans for the return of permanent staff back to campus.

1. Background Information / College Roadmap

Over the past six months the College has established a 'Returning to Campus Working Group' to develop a campus-wide approach to the long-term return of staff once the pandemic recedes. Both the President and Managing Director have been active participants in this group.

It is important to note that all permanent staff *except for Sabbatical Officers* are contractually employed by the College. Unless specified within a contract, the Union adopts the policies and procedures approved by the College and applies them to all staff.

The working group has based its thinking around three core phases:

i. Phase one: Essential Access

While government restrictions remain in place (now until at least 21 June 2021), onsite access is prioritised only for those activities and/or services which need to continue or resume onsite.

ii. Phase Two: Transition and Learn

In line with the government's roadmap and England's move into Step, the College's institution-wide phase two was planned to start on 1 July when more of the community are able to safely work on campus. There is no expectation that all staff will immediately return to campus at the beginning of phase two. Increased presence on campus will be incremental and driven by departmental and safety requirements.

This will be a learning period where new flexible working policies will be tried and tested, technology enabling more flexible and hybrid working will be introduced and work to establish the optimal use of space and space sharing will be carried out. All of this will inform and allow for the planning required for the third phase. The first formal review of the impacts of hybrid working will take place by the end of August 2021. This review, and information relating to the number of students the College is expecting on campus, will inform a decision on the ongoing length of phase two.

iii. Phase Three: Ambition

There are many potential benefits to more flexible ways of working and that the lessons learned during this period may inform working practices and the use of space and of technology. As the College continues to learn and improve over the coming year, it plans to listen to the experiences and views of the College community and establish future ambitions for working arrangements and investment in space and technology. These changes may be significant – so it will take time to understand the impact and implications of any potential changes as it moves through the first two phases.

The full College policy is attached as Appendix One of this document.

As a smaller and more agile organisation, we have already started a move towards phase two, with a significant portion of our permanent staff already back working from the office on a part time basis.

Our intention is to start this formally for all staff on Monday 2 August, reflecting the new academic year, change in staffing posts, and the recent government announcement re: stage four.

2. Role Types

It should be noted that contractually, the formal location of all Union staff will continue to be 'South Kensington and other central London campuses'. Section 6 of the College policy sets out the two categories of staff that are envisaged as we exit the pandemic:

- i. College Location: roles required on campus or a College site 100% of the time. Work needs to be carried out on campus; predominantly customer-facing roles requiring a physical presence to perform duties.
- ii. Hybrid: roles which can be performed through a combination of remote working and working at a College location. There will be the need for flexibility to ensure operational requirements continue to be met and the delivery of work is maintained. The balance of remote / College location working within hybrid arrangements and the impact on the overall team will need to be carefully reviewed. All staff, irrespective of their work location category, may from time to time with reasonable notice be required to attend campus for meetings and/or training at the request of management.

For the Union it is clear that we will have staff in both categories, reflecting the nature of our operation and requirements of specific posts.

3. Hybrid Roles

Over the past three months the Senior Management Team have been consulting with all staff regarding their expectations of what 'hybrid' would mean. The results broadly follow the wider picture in the College.

Our 'standard hybrid model' will be for permanent time staff to work *at least but not limited to* 60% of their hours from South Kensington (or other campus locations). This is based on the following core principles:

- i. We have consulted with staff: there is broad consensus for this approach, with staff eager to return to the office whilst maintaining some portion of flexibility. There is a particular desire from those in more junior roles to return to the office, almost certainly reflective of personal circumstances.
- ii. We are a student facing organisation: our services are at the 'front line' of the student experience at Imperial. Those areas of the organisation traditionally considered 'back office' in other charities also engage regularly with students. Students value and expect this in-person interaction, and it is critical in making us more effective.
- iii. We are a membership organisation: the Union employs staff to deliver services and support our members. It is crucial that we have an understanding of members' experiences on campus, and that we are aware of developments and changes to campus life. A regularly presence 'on campus' is therefore essential for all staff.

- iv. We need to rebuild and develop our culture: alongside the pandemic we have been through significant turnaround and transformation over the past 18 months. Physical proximity and face to face contact will be crucial to build a positive culture within the staff team.
- v. We are a relatively small organisation: many of our teams are small in headcount and require support from across the organisation on a daily basis. This is better enabled via face to face working, making us more agile and able to respond to changing circumstances.
- vi. We have sufficient office space: we are able to accommodate all staff returning to campus due the quality and size of our office space.

Due to the cyclical nature of our operation, and requirement for the entire organisation to work on large projects such as Welcome, our elections and our awards, we will also need to identify 'key periods' where all staff are required to work from the office irrespective of their category.

4. Initial Category Allocation

We have allocated the following staff teams broadly into the following categories, though much of this will be considered at an *individual level*.

College Location	Hybrid
Sabbatical Officers	Student Representation
Senior Management Team	Student Advice
Venues	Student Opportunities & Development
Retail	Health & Safety
	Finance
	Systems
	Marketing & Communications
	HR & Central Services

It should be noted that:

- i. There remains flexibility for staff listed as 'College Location' to work away from the office as required for specific purposes – i.e. to complete specific projects.
- ii. Staff will be asked to discuss and agree their working model with their line manager, which will need to be finally approved by the Senior Management Team to ensure we have a holistic approach across the organisation.
- iii. College's strategic HR partner (Shola Alabi) will provide us with individual support where there is disagreement between the Union and an individual staff member over their working pattern.
- iv. Desk and office re-allocation will be completed over mid-July, taking into account our expected staffing structure and social distance guidance from the College.