

**Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 24 February 2021**

Student Trustee Reflections

Author(s): Milia Hasbani (Student Trustee)

Purpose: To provide Board with a reflection on the two years as a Trustee of Imperial College Union.

What did you particularly value being part of the Board as a Trustee and why?

- I am proud of my time as a trustee and my contributions. I am very happy to leave the role at a time where the Union is in better shape than when I started this role, and I am glad to have had the chance to contribute to this positive change. We have made incredible changes, and there is still more to go. Hopefully, the new strategy will form a basis for future work.
- I have been part of so many interesting and eye-opening experiences, such as recruitment of a Managing Director, Trustees and Chair of Board, as well as health and safety overhauling, budgeting, and strategy writing.
- I have extremely valued interacting more closely with staff in the Union from the perspective of a trustee and gaining more of an understanding of how the different roles in the Union come together to create a functional organisation.
- The Trustees are incredible, and I am honoured to have met, worked with, and learnt from you all!

What have you learnt during your time as a Trustee and what went well?

- I learnt what it means to be a Trustee of an organisation, and how it is important to have this oversight to ensure an organisation is sustainable in the long term, while fulfilling its purpose and aims. Through being a member of the Board, I have learnt a massive amount about how charities work, how a board works. I have found it fascinating to have a look behind the scenes on how decisions are made, while learning the fine lines between oversight and management.
- I learnt how important it is to have up to date policies and oversight that there is actual implementation of concepts that have been agreed. It is so important to regularly review structures and systems to ensure we are getting the most out of the Board and the organisation, something I enjoyed doing as part of the governance review of the Union.
- I also learnt a great deal about finances and the financial oversight of such a large organisation.

Did you experience any challenges as part of your role? If so, what were they?

- The role at the beginning was a shift from the representation roles I was used to. It took time to get used to the role and feel like I belonged and was bringing valuable comments and conversation to the table. Not having the training and induction in my first year in the role was a setback, but having experienced the role for a year and received training this past year, really made a difference in how I felt I contributed.

- There were few instances when I felt like I wasn't fully respected, that I was being treated as a student rather than a Trustee, but this has thankfully changed with some changes in staffing around the Union.
- Some tasks undertaken by Board are more challenging than others – especially when it comes to sensitive disciplinary matters as well as navigating the politics of the union and learning how things work in specific ways.

What recommendations would you make for areas of improvement for Student Trustees in the future? (Also rRads as advice for future student Trustees)

- The training was really fascinating and important. It definitely needs to remain a part of a Trustee's induction.
- Make use of your mentors (this process could be a more formalised). Reach out to them if there's anything you would like to clarify about Board, the Union, or other matters. As discussed as part of other reviews, some feedback may be helpful to help reassure Student Trustees that they are contributing in an appropriate manner.
- Be prepared – to make the most of the experience, it is very helpful to carefully read up on the papers being presented beforehand and take note of any points you would like to raise or clarify.
- Try to engage with other members of the Board, both internal and external, and ask any questions where you think things are unclear. The external Trustees have a wealth of experiences, so take this opportunity to learn from them.
- You are at the Board meetings for a reason – your thoughts, opinions, concerns, and questions are extremely valuable, so don't hesitate to share them with the team.