

GIB discussion paper – Union Council and Constituent Unions

Abhijay Sood, Union President

Following requests from volunteers over recent years, as well as my own manifesto commitments and objectives, we have identified some key areas on which we would like to work this year. In kicking off this work, we wanted to consult with this committee about two key areas in the Union: Union Council (part A), and the support provision for Constituent Unions (part B).

One of the motivating factors behind conducting this work this year is that some experienced individuals are set to depart ICU this year, and we want to ensure knowledge isn't lost as these people are. However, we're also fully cognisant of the fact that current circumstances may not mean completely holistic changes are possible or desirable this year.

I'd welcome any feedback on this document before the meeting – the intention is to provoke a rounded conversation, so if anything glaringly obvious is missing or there's any major area you think we should talk about, please don't hesitate to let me know.

A) Union Council

Council meetings have been reasonably steady in recent years; although the subcommittees have become more useful, in general, Council meetings themselves have neither been lively nor have they actively challenged officers (especially OTs). While we don't have some of the issues with quorum that plagued previous years, there are clearly things we could be doing better, both in terms of keeping members engaged and holding officers to account.

1. Scope

What should we be aiming to do this year? What kind of changes should we be trying to make for future years?

2. Improving officer accountability

What can we do to make Council members more able to question and challenge elected officers this year? What can be done to aid this in future years?

Are there any structural changes that might help facilitate this?

To what extent should Council be holding officers other than the OTs to account?

3. Making Council more relevant to members

What can be done to ensure Council conversations are not alienating to new members? How do we keep conversations with Council relevant to students? How do we ensure the things people really care about are being discussed at Council?

Should we be trying to make other students more aware of these discussions? If so, how?

4. Membership and structure

Should we be attempting to make any major changes to the membership of Council this year?

Should we be trying to change the fundamental structure of Council? Is our representative model the right one?

5. What shall we do next?

B) Support for Constituent Unions

Constituent Unions have played an extremely important role in the history of student representation and engagement at Imperial, some of which predate the university itself. Though their influence has waxed and waned, they have remained an integral part of the student union at this university. However, there's definite room for improvement. Engagement and efficacy vary considerably year on year and CU to CU and could probably be higher across the board. ICU could also do more to support the CUs. While I'm conscious that "one size fits all" solutions are undesirable here, I believe we can share good ideas and learn from each other.

1. Scope

What should we be aiming to do this year? What kind of changes should we be trying to make for future years?

2. Purpose

What is the purpose of the CUs? Why do they exist?

How does the case for CUs differ across the different CUs?

3. What staff support do CUs need to achieve these aims?

In the short-term (this year)? In the medium-term (by 2022)?

4. Structure/belonging

What role should the CUs play within the Union?

Should all of the entities that are currently CUs be CUs? Should all students be part of a CU?

What can ICU do to make the CUs feel more connected to the Union?

5. What shall we do next?

Separate meetings

I'd like to arrange meetings with each CU before the end of term to take some of this work further, and perhaps also to consult on other areas of Union work. Thanks for reading and I look forward to seeing you all!