

Imperial College Union
Leadership Group / Tuesday 10th December

Commercial Bookings Policy 2020-21

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Purpose: To propose a guiding set of principles and tests to use when looking to hire our venues to potential clients.

Decision(s): To approve

1. Current Context

Both the College and the Union are responding to the challenges that have been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this is not a unique situation as all universities and students' unions across the sector are facing these challenges. Prior to the pandemic, we ran a large commercial operation, meaning we have been impacted more significantly and, therefore, we have had to make difficult decisions around the future of our commercial operation.

As a Union, we have worked incredibly hard to ensure our building is COVID-19 secure and that we can allow our students back into our space to use, but this has meant more controlled measures and, for a large number of our groups, they may be unable to use our space as the activities they would be doing do not adhere to government guidelines and legislation. Our bar (568) has been allowed to open, although under tight restrictions, but we are unable to use our other spaces around the building as socialising spaces as they are very clearly spaces for activity and if we can find suitable alternative options that provide either a financial benefit or benefit our student groups, we should explore them.

2. Guiding Principles & Tests

Principles

- i. Core purpose is a priority

As a membership organisation, our members must be at the forefront of all decisions we make and not limit or harm the experience that they would have in the decisions we make. Our core purpose is the advancement of education for all Imperial College London students, but we can use this as an opportunity to generate funding to support our core purpose and activities.

- ii. Commercial bookings in defined periods that are reviewed annually

Our spaces are used by: Clubs, Societies & Projects (CSPs); Liberation and Community Networks; our Representation networks; and by Union staff, and we need to make sure that we do not inhibit their ability to book our spaces by hiring them out to external clients. Under COVID, our spaces are not being utilised as frequently due to the guidance the government have released, but this is subject to change through the year and so we should not limit our ability to scale our room usage for our student groups as the year develops. Our student groups will always take priority during term time. During term holidays, specific commercial bookings may take priority if they are especially lucrative, but this must be decided by the leadership group on a case-by-case basis. There will also be exception dates (i.e. Welcome week) where ordinary Commercial booking will not be allowed.

Key Tests

iii. Safety

It is important that any activity or use of our space must be COVID secure. We have implemented an application for Union groups to get risk assessments approved and this will need completing before we allow them to use Union and/or College space. For any external bookings of our spaces, we would require in-depth, clear and detailed risk assessments provided by the client that would need sign off, on behalf of Leadership, by an approved delegate.

iv. Is it aligned with College?

College are not themselves allowing external bookings in their spaces currently, but they have been receptive to suggestions about us using our spaces for external bookings. We will only proceed down this route of allowing external bookings if College Silver Group sign off on this decision.

v. Values of the client

We should be looking for clients that are at a minimum **risk neutral** to our values. Any clients that would risk threatening our values would need to be signed off by the Leadership group.

vi. Is it a sustainable booking?

There is a need for us to only work with Clients who would be willing to recur their bookings with us, as this saves a large amount of work for our staff, and would allow us to get a clear picture of the amount we would expect to bring in during the year. Whilst it is in our interest to ensure the clients we bring in are willing to recur their booking, we will only allow bookings on a single year basis and not on a multi-year basis. In rare occasions where a one-off booking would be particularly lucrative to the Union, without a significant amount of work required, then this would also be an option we may wish to take.

vii. Is it economically worth it?

Commercial bookings should only be looked at when our staff have appropriate time to put work hours towards them and would not be sacrificing other projects or tasks. We would also not put staff work hours towards actively going out and searching for clients, but rather only deal with clients who initiate the conversation with us.

3. Commercial Booking Approval

All Commercial bookings must be approved by a group comprising of: the Sales & Sponsorship Manager; the Deputy President (Finance & Services); the Head of Membership Services; the Student Opportunities & Development Co-Ordinator and the Venues & Operations Manager. For a booking to be brought to this group for approval it must meet all of the principles and key tests, but just because it meets these criteria does not mean that it will automatically be approved and will be dependent on how the Union groups are using those spaces around those times. If it is either a booking that needs priority over a Union group outside term time, or the booking is from a client who may pose a negative risk to our values then the approval must come from the Leadership group instead of the above group membership.