

**Imperial College Union
Imperial Athletes Update
Union Council / 20th July 2021**

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- Purpose: To update council on the phased roll out of the Sports Hub, now called Imperial Athletes
- Decision: To note developments and hold next year's sports chair and DPCS accountable for the full implementation of Imperial Athletes

1. Background

In the 2018/19 academic year, Union Council approved the decision to create the Sports Hub at the 22nd January 2019 meeting¹. At that meeting, Council agreed to the formation of the Sports Hub within the Bye-Laws and creation of a new sub-committee of Council.

Over the 19/20 academic year, a branding agency was used to create "Imperial Athletes". This was student led, and the agency worked with every club captain to understand values held by Imperial's sporting community and use their feedback to create a new home for sport at Imperial. As the 19/20 DPCS said in their reflection's, every other aspect of the sports hub roll out was "deprioritised in the Autumn term and did not make it back to the front of my priorities due to the pandemic."²

This academic year, the sports exec, Move Imperial staff, Union staff, and I were keen to ensure that we could adequately support our sports clubs during the pandemic. This meant every sports club was quickly onboarded into Imperial Athletes in September, and the sports exec has since continued to work with Move Imperial and Union staff to develop sufficient frameworks to support our sports clubs.

2. Phased roll out status

This section extracts the bullet points from each of the phases from the original sports hub document and provides a quick update on each in italics underneath each piece of work.

Phase 1 – 18/19

This very document - start determining basic frameworks, define the governance structure and begin work setting it up.

- *Sports Hub document approved by Council in 2019*

Finish off research document on funding amounts for court and field and meet clubs to ensure no one is missed out, or losing out on the new model. Anyone deemed to be worse off will be worked with closely to ensure they are not negatively impacted, either financially or experience wise (with small margin built in).

¹ Original Sports Hub paper: https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/18-19/Union_Council/file/5295

² DPCS Reflections 2019/20: https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/19-20/Board_of_Trustees/file/6178

- *This was not done until this academic year, but every single club was met with during the club budgeting process. This has fed into a holistic Imperial Athletes Budgets, and exception clubs have been identified where they will need to deviate from the tiered structure of club memberships.*

Start work on a branding piece for the hub, and for sport at Imperial in general.

- *Imperial Athletes brand was created in 2019/20 academic year*

If passed, at the end of the year host and handover the first Sports Committee meeting.

- *Sports Clubs Board (SCB) was established in 2020/21 and met regularly this academic year.*
- *It currently sits as a sub-committee of CSPB – this governance structure should be reviewed in 2021/22.*
- *More work is needed with this committee to review it's composition, standing orders and to become the committee that looks after Sports Sector, ICSMSU Sports clubs, and RSM sports clubs.*

Create forward agenda, standing orders and budgeting / development plan timelines.

- *Other than creating standing orders as mentioned above, meetings were held as needed over the 2020/21 academic year as the pandemic made it difficult to establish what to expect this year.*
- *Budgeting was done under a similar timeframe as CSP budgeting is traditionally done. This will change next year as the development plan becomes the clubs most important document, with funding linked to their activities rather than their budget.*

Phase 2 - 19-20

All phase 2 work that depended on the DPCS and the Union were not completed in 2019/20 and have instead been completed over the course of the 20/21 academic year as described below

Performance framework released in full, "trial run" of first clubs under new membership framework.

- *In 2019/20 Move Imperial selected the performance clubs, and in 2020/21 the performance structure was suspended due to the pandemic.*
- *The sports exec and DPCS will need to restart this piece of work in 2021/22*
- *All sports clubs were included in a "trial run" at the start of the 20/21 academic year due to the pandemic.*

Define in full remaining frameworks and start working within the newly created groups and governance structures.

- *Temporary frameworks have been established during the 2020/21 academic year, and these have been written up in a 40 page Imperial Athletes Handbook.*
- *Sports clubs, Move Imperial, and the Union will need to work within these frameworks at the start of the year, and changes will need to go through SCB. If the governance of sport is deemed necessary to change, then Union Council will need to approve any changes that CSPB cannot.*

Continue Sports Committee meetings to review processes and procedures and redefine them.

- *Sports Exec meetings have happened regularly throughout the 20/21 year.*
- *The sports chair has also attended ICU x Move Imperial meetings whilst we have been establishing staff protocols during the 20/21 academic year.*

- *The Imperial Athletes handbook has been created as live document, with new processes and procedures written down for all students and staff to see. This will be shared with all club captains at the start of next academic year (21/22).*

Start work on communicating to individuals about the changes that will be taking place in 20/21.

- *As mentioned in the background section above, changes were not communicated in 19/20 and the pandemic necessitated changes to support our clubs adequately.*
- *All sports clubs were communicated with at the start of the 20/21 academic year (although these comms could have been better)*
- *Regular Sports Sector meetings have not happened this year and have only occurred in an ad-hoc way.*
- *An Imperial Athletes mail chimp has been established to enable quick communication with all sports clubs and all IA members as needed.*
- *The Sports Chair next year must restart regular monthly all Sports clubs meetings.*

Start meeting with other clubs to get their buy in to the process and learn how they can be brought within the hubs membership and funding systems for 20/21.

- *No sports clubs were brought under the IA structure in 19/20.*

Setup data analysis and evaluation procedures to allow for continual adjustment and refinement of the hub and the Sports Committees processes and systems.

- *No work has been done in this area in 19/20 or 20/21.*
- *This requires significant time from the systems team and has been put on hold whilst that team has been under resourced.*

Club development plans to be completed.

- *Club developments were completed by clubs in 19/20 with the Senior Sports Development Officer.*
- *In 20/21, the sports exec were more involved and clubs were asked to enhance and adapt their 19/20 development plans.*
- *Next year (21/22) these development plans will be the foundation for every club's success as we remove the complex budgeting process.*

Phase 3 - 20-21

Launch for other sports and allow for expressions of interest from other clubs (recreational / other CUs) for access to membership and funding systems.

- *All sports clubs were brought within IA in 20/21. No comms have been extended to other clubs but all members of CSPB have been kept up to date with IA developments.*
- *2 Sports clubs felt that they didn't fit within the current IA structure, and so made a temporary move to the Recreation Sector.*
- *Rec sector clubs that participate in BUCS competitions should be contacted next year to consult with them how they might fit within IA and how we can deliver the best experience for these clubs.*

Start planning expenditure strategies for any buildups of excess funds.

- *No concrete plans have been agreed upon, but the sports exec, ICU, and Move are keen that any buildup funds are invested straight back into student club sport.*
- *This needs to be agreed in 21/22.*

Start meeting with original clubs (field and court) to put together an evaluation piece on the successes and failures so far.

- *Because Imperial Athletes did not launch for any clubs in 19/20 it has been impossible to do this evaluation piece this year.*
- *This will need to be done in 21/22 with all sports clubs in Imperial Athletes.*

Start meeting with CUs and more recreational sports to see how they can be incorporated.

- RSM sports clubs were brought into the IA structure this academic year.
- *As stated in bullet point above, Rec sector clubs that participate in BUCS competitions should be contacted next year to consult with them how they might fit within IA and how we can deliver the best experience for these clubs.*

Phase 4 - 21-22 (next year)

Full release of the hub based off data from previous phases. Release by October 2021, in line with the end of the Be Active Strategy.

- *21/22 will see the first post-pandemic year where Imperial Athletes must fully operate.*
- *The Be Active Strategy has had a one year extension and will last until the end of the 21/22 academic year*

Complete detailed data analysis and evaluation on the hubs overall successes and failures so far.

- *This should be possible in the 21/22 academic year with criteria established at the start of the year, and evaluation at the end.*

Create detailed recommendations piece and strategy for the future of the Sports Hub and Sports Committee.

- *21/22 will see the creation of a new sports strategy at Imperial. It is imperative that all lessons are learnt from Imperial Athletes and sports clubs are sufficiently involved to co-create it.*

Ratification at Council for how the plan has been followed.

- *The DPCS or Sports Chair must bring an update paper to council at the end of the 21/22 academic year*

3. Next Steps

A lot of work has gone in to developing the Imperial Athletes handbook this year. The document still needs finishing off, and it's imperative that next year's sports chair has sufficient time before October to contribute to this.

The systems team are in the process of enabling the IA membership model to work within the system and all teams have been worked with to establish what tiers their members will be in. Every sports clubs should have memberships available to purchase from the start of the academic year.

Changes to policies that are governed by CSPB have been made to enable Imperial Athletes to operate this year. Depending on the success of implementation next year, IA Governing Documents will need a review, and it may be deemed necessary to create changes to council's standing orders about how the chain works, and possibly need an extra seat on council.

Running Sport from two bodies still leads to various issues and as the Student Opportunities & Development team grows, more collaboration is needed between ICU and Move Imperial. Roles and responsibilities will need to be re-evaluated to ensure that we are delivering the best possible student experience.

It is my opinion that as students are the end-user to the student sport offer, Imperial Athletes must fix the following issues to be a success:

- Lack of student decision-making regarding student sport
- Lack of student influence over decisions
- Lack of transparency of decision-making processes and financial structure
- Lack of communication between the bodies
- Slow communications to students to solve problems
- Lack of signposting for inquiries to solve problems
- Lack of prioritising student sport issues

The IA handbook establishes a base framework to fix most of these issues.

Student-led decisions will be the make-or-break for student sport at Imperial, and students need an effective forum for their voice to be heard and decisions to be acted upon.

I look forward to hearing about the success of Imperial Athletes over the coming year, and would like to thank all those involved over the course of its development.