

**Imperial College Union  
Board of Trustees / 8 December 2021**

**Council Chair Report**

Author(s): Michala Flegrova (Council Chair)

Purpose: To report on the work of the Union Council Chair and Union Council

Decision(s): To note

### **1. Intro**

There have been three meetings of Union Council since the last meeting of the Board of Trustees; on September 30<sup>th</sup>, November 2<sup>nd</sup> and November 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **2. Meeting format & attendance**

The September Council meeting took place over Teams, while the other two meetings were taking place in person.

The in-person meetings were started at 6pm with an informal mingle, with the proper meeting commencing at 6:30pm. We have been providing pizza, which helped encourage Council members to take part in the informal introduction and be on time; this would likely not work as well without the free food to bribe them with.

Council members have been encouraged to stay for drinks after the in-person Council meetings. However, the number of Council members staying for these has been low (around 10), with only few new members joining us (1-2). This is largely because we have been unable to book the Union Bar for this; we have now booked the Bar for all Term 2 Council meetings. We have also not been able to offer free drinks to members due to budget constraints.

The attendance has been consistently good so far, with the first meeting seeing the attendance of 75% of voting members, increasing to 91% and 76% for the second and third meeting respectively. I am expecting this to drop off slightly as Term 2 starts with an exam season.

It is expected that some Term 2 and Term 3 meetings will need to take place remotely, depending on government guidance and when the meetings are scheduled for. Unfortunately, we are not able to facilitate hybrid meetings due to technological constraints.

Three Council members have lost their seat so far according to Bye-laws, Section A, 3. One of them has already regained her seat at the last Council. We therefore have 45 voting members at the moment, with further 10 at risk of losing their seat, should they not turn up to the next meeting.

### **3. Summary of papers passed**

- Changes to the Associate Membership Policy
- Restructure of the CSPB, to re-integrate the sports clubs into the same forum
- Changes to how Motions of No Confidence and Censures are carried out, allowing the Management Groups to carry them out for lower-level volunteers
- Rejected paper: asking for the venue of Union Council to be changed to allow Cheerleading to train in the Union Dining Hall during that time instead
- **Temporary increase of the votes the AWOs share from 2 to 3, while the GSU president role is suspended. Note: this requires a temporary suspension of the Bye-Laws**

- Mandating the DPE to work with the FoE and College to resolve issues with modules shared across departments

#### **4. Objective 1: Council Publicity**

Unfortunately, this objective has not progressed since the last Council meeting. This is both due to my own time constraints as well as the fact that Council meetings have so far clashed with important publicity-heavy events (Autumn Elections, Strikes Referendum), which meant the marketing team were not keen to promote Council meetings to students to attend.

#### **5. Objective 2: OTs Reporting**

One of my objectives for this year has been to improve the way Officer Trustees are held accountable in Council. I have put together a small working group which has been looking at how we could make this work more effectively.

We have now trialled a new system, which has seen Council members divided into five groups, with each group responsible for the proper scrutiny of one of the OT reports. The groups are seated together at Council, and they are encouraged to use the first 30 minutes to discuss the report and come up with comments and questions. A spokesperson is chosen from each group who then delivers these comments and questions after the report is presented by the relevant OT.

The groups are chosen in such a way that each contains one Officer Trustee (not the one whose report is being scrutinised) and at least one experienced Council member.

This seemed to work well in the last November meeting, although more time needs to be allowed for the reports.

The working group will meet again to discuss how successful the trial has been, and whether it would be helpful to come up with any criteria to assess the reports against. I will report the conclusions of these discussions at the next Board meeting.

Instead of voting on reports in the traditional way, Council members have been asked to assess how happy they are with the performance of each OT on the scale of -3 to 3. The votes are anonymous, but the averages for each OT can be found on the publicly available voting record.

#### **6. Staff absence**

Since Victoria left at the end of October, I have definitely felt an increase in workload on my part. While I am temporarily supported by the Representation Team, which I am grateful for, I have been responsible for significantly more admin tasks associated with Council, which altogether take up approximately the equivalent of two working days per Council meeting.

I am looking forward to the new Governance Officer starting in January, although I am anticipating there will be a temporary workload increase while they are inducted and taught how Council works and what needs doing. In the long term I am hoping my own workload associated with Council will halve.