

**Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 16th February 2022**

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. Introduction

There have been two meetings of Union Council since the last meeting of the Board of Trustees; on January 11th and February 8th. Next meeting is taking place on March 8th.

2. Meeting format & attendance

Both recent meetings have had to take place on Teams; in January because of England being in Plan B, and in February due to a Covid outbreak in the Union causing 4/5 of the OTs to be isolating. The online format has made it more difficult to encourage engagement, and technical problems (as well as lack of sustenance) made it tricky to go ahead with the new format of our OT report scrutiny.

We are hoping that we will be able to hold the March meeting in person, and we will likely organise a proper social afterwards to encourage continuation of engagement as we get well into the second half of the academic year.

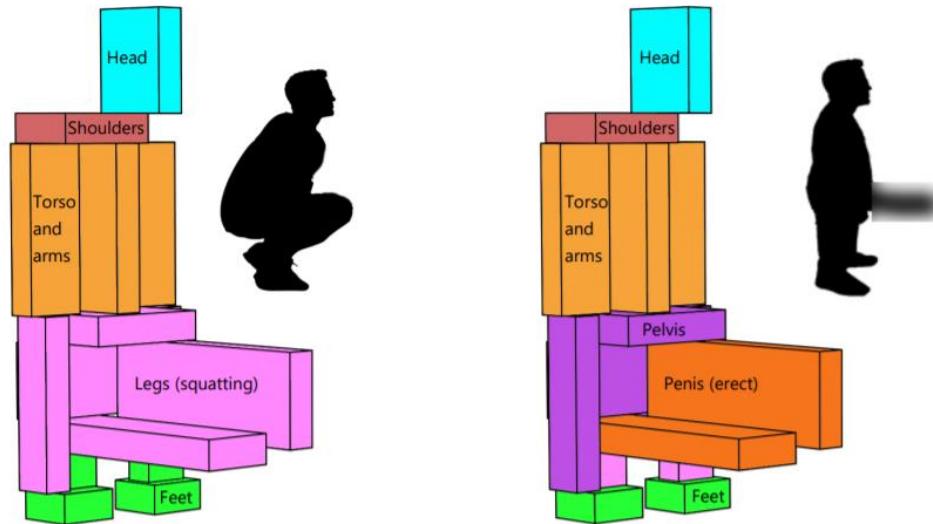
Thanks to the digital format of the meeting, attendance has gone up significantly, with 85% of voting members attending in January and over 90% in February. However, engagement is lower than during in-person meetings, and attendance drops off towards the end of the meeting as people silently log off.

While in-person attendance is our preferred option, I would like to properly investigate our options regarding hybrid meetings, to allow students with serious reasons for not being able to make an in-person meeting to still reasonably participate. We are currently limited by poor audio options for a large meeting room.

All Council members who lost their seat in Term 1, according to Bye-laws, Section A, 3, have since regained it since. Two students have not been able to attend in-person meetings due to being abroad and have benefitted from the online format, but I have been assured they will be in the UK in March. One Council member lost their seat in February.

3. Summary of papers passed

- Implementation of the Recommendations of the PG Engagement Review
- Motion to expand the educational access provisions for disabled students (mandating OTs to lobby the College)
- Motion to prevent the installation of the "Alert" statue – see below



4. Rejected / withdrawn papers

A Motion of No Confidence into a president of a large society was due to come to Council in February, backed by over 30 seconds, several of which were Council members. This motion had been classified as confidential. However, the motion was withdrawn at the last minute due to insufficient time to properly investigate and evidence the allegations on which the paper was based. Due to the sensitive nature of the paper I can provide a verbal update if Board is interested.

5. Objective 1: Council Publicity

No updates

6. Objective 2: OTs Reporting

We have been trying a new system of scrutinising Council reports, where Council members are divided into five groups, each looking at one report in the 30 minutes before Council.

We had difficulties making this work in the January meeting due to technical issues. In the February meeting this took place in Teams break-out rooms, which worked incredibly smoothly from a practical point of view, but Council members reported that they prefer the in-person version of this activity ("Pizza helps you focus" - anonymous Council member).

This format seems to lead to an overload of questions to OTs, so more work needs to be done to ensure we find the right balance.

I have noticed that Council is often used as a place to ask OTs questions unrelated to their reports. While these are sometimes interesting, often the answer is only useful to one person or CSP, and this can lead to disengagement from the rest of the Council members. I suspect this is largely due to occasional poor communication from some of the OTs or staff in the Activities team, which forces Council members to ask their questions at Council. I would like to further investigate ways to use Council time more efficiently in this respect.

The working group focused on improving OT accountability will reconvene again before next Council to adjust our system based on feedback from the last few meetings.

7. Working with Union staff

I am very grateful for Clem's help in the past month; it has been great to have him help with Council admin. I am now hoping my workload related to Council will go down gradually as Clem gets more familiar with what needs doing, and as I slowly let go of my perfectionism and the urge to have control over everything.