**Imperial College Union
EDI Strategy Discussion**

Author(s):   Tom Newman (Interim Managing Director)
              Nathalie Podder (Deputy President Welfare)
              Cat Turhan (Representation and Advice Manager)

Purpose: To consider the priorities and themes for the Union's Equality, Diversity and
              Inclusion strategy

1. Background

In May 2021 the Board approved our new strategy – Back to Basics, which sets a clear path
for the organisation over the next two years. A core aspect of this was to develop and
approve an organisation-wide equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy and action plan.
This work is central to our mission: to make a positive impact on the experiences and
outcomes of all Imperial College students from all backgrounds. It is codified in one of our
aims: to reduce and challenge inequalities affecting students. Furthermore, it is made explicit
in one of our values: we are inclusive in everything that we should do. The strategy should
support the Union to secure positive, transformational change in this area over the next two
years.

The Board devolved the leadership of this work to a Task and Finish Group that includes
Union staff, trustees and student representatives from across the organisation.

To ensure it is effective, the Task and Finish group identified that the work should therefore
also accomplish a number of second-order objectives
  i.   The strategy should set out in clear terms what the organisation means by the
        three concepts equality, diversity and inclusion, why they are important, and what
        'great' looks like. It should establish a formal theory of change for how they
        interlink and impact on each other in the context of Imperial College Union.
  ii.   The strategy should be explicitly contextualised within the environment that we
        operate in. It should consider the specific challenges that we face and reflect the
        fact that our membership is both changing and largely out of our control.
  iii. The strategy should integrate with our Back-to-Basics plan, adopting a similar
        structure and common terminology where appropriate. It should ultimately feel
        like a complementary piece of work of equal importance for the organisation.
  iv.   The action plan should include tangible projects and pieces of work that we can
        achieve over the next two years. It should be set out in thematic terms against
        our key services / functions to ensure there is clear accountability for both what
        we want to achieve and who is responsible.
  v.   The action plan should prioritise these projects into the following categories to
        help focus our work and ensure we have the sufficient resources to accomplish
        our goals:
        a. Quick wins
        b. Year one
        c. Year two
        d. Ongoing / major culture change.

The Group also identified a number of desired outputs:-
Output one: a formal project plan developed and agreed with the Task and Finish Group that

also includes a clear definition and framework for the concepts, a theory of change, and associated timeline for the next phases.

Output two: a research report setting out some 'key results' regarding how the Union is currently performing against some conventional EDI measures.

Output three: a draft strategic framework that includes a range of key consultation questions and areas for further discussion and engagement.

Output four: an EDI Strategy for the Union.

Output five: an EDI Action Plan for the Union based on the new strategy.

The EDI Strategy work was led with Tom Flynn as the senior staff lead, and Officer Trustee lead, Nathalie Podder. With the departure of Tom Flynn, the ownership of this project has since transferred to staff leads, Tom Newman and Cat Turhan, with Nathalie remaining as the Officer Trustee lead.

2. Commissioning Koreo and Playback of Themes

In Spring 2022, the Task & Finish group awarded a consultancy tender to Koreo, a learning consultancy group with a portfolio of EDI strategic development and facilitation. They held a series of 13 individual and 10 group discovery conversations with the steering group, student officers, senior leadership, SU trustees, managers, SU staff, Liberation Officers, and student group leaders - amounting to 36 hours of conversation across 55 people that enabled them to understand the context, challenges that the Union faces, and ambitions for the future.

They also delivered a data and desktop review of the Union's current strategic and operational frameworks and available data that has been produced by the Union and the College. This included available engagement data, strategies, research projects and operational information, as well as the Union's 'Back to Basics' strategy and associated plans.

August 2022 a facilitated workshop was held with all Union staff and elected Officer Trustees to deliver some training on EDI in the higher education sector, and a playback of the themes they had ascertained from the research. These are:

This work is set in a clear context of challenge and change - where through COVID through to major changes in the organisation, a new strategy and challenges in the College we see a deeper overall setting of positive & practical progress.

Good intentions can be held back by a lack of clear definition, mission and knowledge on EDI & EDI issues - where people identify an overall mission of "identifying and removing barriers" for this work but feel nervous talking and acting on it.

EDI is often seen through a familiar and limiting 'numbers-first' approach which can present risks - where quantitative is not always balanced with quantitative and risks dismisses people's feelings, experiences and perceptions creating friction.

Culture is a work in progress but can often be seen as controlled and led by the past - where the 'Imperial way' is seen to be ingrained through and in everything and lacks intentionality, shared responsibility and where people feel they have a voice.

Leadership is understood to be top-heavy, male and masculine internally, and sometimes holding back - where a small leadership team and organisational change has created a

representation challenge not always evidenced with practical action.

Structures, processes and ways of working can also be limiting for EDI work, culture and personal development - where silos and physical distance and space between staff and other stakeholders can make people feel disconnected.

The relationship with the institution is developing and offers an opportunity of alignment and shared endeavour - with a clear commitment from the College within its own EDI strategy to work together with the students' union on these issues

There are obvious opportunities to turn positive intent into purposeful progress - with staff, stakeholders, officers and students keen to build on the commitments within the union's own strategy and of this work to produce a practical pathway for change.

Staff responded to these observations, and this, combined with the reflections from the board, will form the basis of the first iteration of the high-level strategy.

3. Proposed Themes

The following themes are extrapolated from the Playback as key areas of focus for the strategy. These are in development with Koreo, and the project leads are looking for the Board's feedback on these at this meeting.

Theme	Areas of Focus
An inclusive work culture, led by a values-led SMT	- Understanding and improving workplace inclusivity and culture - Developing inclusive leadership behaviours - Reviewing ICU policies and procedures which promote a safe, inclusive and accessible workforce
Inclusive student services for Imperial students	- Analysing the depth and breadth of engagement and participation - Reviewing the cultures in venues & CSPs - Assessing the barriers to participation in Union services including CSPs.
Accessible representation systems which are reflective of the student body	- Reviewing representative positions and structures through an EDI lens - Assessing barriers to participation and engagement in representation - Implementing reform to the processes based on student need
Delivering appropriate and impactful challenge to College	- Influencing College on more inclusive recruitment - Addressing attainment and retention issues - Challenging the 'Imperial Way' and College culture
Embedding the practice in everything we do	- Assessing enablers for change in an EDI context - Ensuring and allocating resource for embedding the strategy

4. Discussion Questions

Breaking into the following discussion groups, the Board will be asked to examine 2-3 of the themes (or more if there is time). They will be asked to discuss:
- A definition of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for Imperial College Union
- If the themes make sense in the context of the intention behind the strategy and the playback observations
- If there are any areas of priority that are missing
- Within each theme, where should the Union focus its resource to achieve positive outcomes and impact

Each discussion group will be given two minutes to offer feedback orally. A member of the group will be asked to summarise the group's observations via email to Tom Newman (T.Newman@imperial.ac.uk).

Group	Members
Facilitators	TN, CT
One	DH, AL, DG, CT
Two	HW, SL, DW, RS
Three	JZ, CD, GL, AC
Four	NM, YY, JC
Five	NP, MF, PP

AC Ashley Cory Interim Director of Marketing & Communications
AL Ang Li Student Trustee
CT Cat Turhan Representation and Advice Manager
CD Charlotte Drastich Student Trustee
DG Dorothy Griffiths External Trustee
DH Dylan Hughes DPCS
DW Dan Wagner External Trustee
GL Genevieve Landricombe External Trustee
HW Hayley Wong President
JZ Jason Zheng DPE
JC Jane Coulson External Trustee
MF Michaela Flegrova Student Trustee
NM Niamh McAuley DPFS
NP Nathalie Podder DPW
PP Phil Power Alumni Trustee
RS Rob Scully Director of Finance & Resources
SL Sam Lovatt Student Trustee
SR Stephen Richardson Chair of the Board
TN Tom Newman Director of Membership Services
YY Yuki Yuan Council Chair

5. Next Steps

Following this discussion, the reflections from the Board will be delivered to Koreo, who will develop the first iteration of a top-level strategy. This will be presented to the Task and Finish Group in late October. A more developed strategy and action plan will be presented to the Board in due course, with timings confirmed after this meeting.