

Imperial College Union

The Felix Editor will be appointed, rather than elected

Union Council 2/5/23

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Union notes

1. The Felix Editor is currently selected each year via a Union-wide ballot, usually run during the Leadership Elections.
2. The Felix Editor, despite their election, has no representative role in the Union.
3. The editorial independence of Felix from the Union leaves little room for performance management and constructive interference from the Union leadership, to which the performance of the Editors over the last four years is testament.

Union believes

1. The Felix Editor is elected to their role because this is how the role has traditionally been filled. This process is no longer fit for purpose.
2. Competency of the Felix Editor is paramount for success of Felix newspaper. An incompetent Editor is able to negatively impact the production of Imperial's only student newspaper, leading to the money spent both on their salary and on the production of the paper (c£60,000 pa) being wasted.
3. Three of the last four Felix Editors have operated at a standard below that expected of them, leading two of them to resign from the role before the end of their year in office.

Union resolves

1. The Felix Editor will, from now on, be appointed to the role.
2. Appointment will take place in the summer term and the Editor will begin their year in the role at the same time as the Officer Trustees, in mid-July.
3. The appointment process will include tests on writing ability, scenario-based reasoning, motive for wanting to take up the role, and interest in student journalism. The process is attached as an appendix to this paper.
4. The final selection panel for the Editor each year should include, at least, one Student Trustee, the Union Director of Membership Services, the out-going Felix Editor (if not re-applying), one member of the College Communications team, and one other member of Union Council that is not an Officer Trustee. The majority of this panel must be students, and there should be at least five members on the panel.
5. A successful candidate for the role will have been registered as a student at Imperial College within the last academic year, and will be limited to holding the role for a maximum of two years – but must reapply for the role after their first year in office.

Felix Editor Selection Process

2023-

1 Role Description

The *Felix* Editor (also known as the Editor-in-Chief) is the most senior member of *Felix* newspaper, and is responsible for all aspects of the paper's operation, including print, digital and social media presence. Under normal circumstances, the Editor will be expected to produce one issue per week for every week of term time during the Imperial College academic year. The Editor will be supported in their role by student volunteers, who in turn will be encouraged by the Editor to use their time at the paper to develop skills associated with the newspaper. They will begin their role in mid-July, in line with the Officer Trustees, and will finish their role on July 31st the following year. They may hold the role for a maximum of two years, and must re-apply for the role between their first and second year if they wish to do so.

2 Selection Overview

The Editor will be selected each year, based on a holistic assessment by the panel that they are competent and will excel in the role. They will demonstrate a keen interest in *Felix* and wider student journalism, show a basic knowledge of current affairs, display an appropriate standard of written communication and display interpersonal tact necessary for handling aspects of the role that require emotional intelligence. The whole process should take no more than three hours and a decision should be conveyed to all candidates as soon as possible. In all ways other than eligibility, the appointment should be treated as a recruitment process for a job in the Union.

3 Eligibility

Any candidate must be a registered student at Imperial College at the beginning of the application process.

4 The Panel

The final selection panel for the Editor each year should include, at least, one Student Trustee, the Union Director of Membership Services, the out-going Felix Editor (if not re-applying), one member of the College Communications team, and one other member of Union Council that is not an Officer Trustee. The majority of this panel must be students, and there should be at least five members on the panel. This ensures that the decision is student-led, with minimal conflicting interest whilst ensuring that the appropriate expertise are present.

The panel should meet several days before the day of the selection process to decide on specifics for that year's selection (e.g general knowledge questions, information for the writing test).

5 The Process

The selection process will be split up into four sections. It is based on the interview stages used by well-ranked universities offering post-graduate journalism courses.

5.1 General Knowledge

This section will be given to each candidate at the same time and be read out by the Director of Membership Services, for the candidates to write down on paper. Candidates should be given enough time to write down the answer, but no more, before the next question is asked - they either know it or they don't. Topics covered should be broad, including news, arts, music and popular science, to reflect the different sections of the newspaper. The Editor will be primarily in charge of the News section of the paper, and higher education and Imperial-specific news should be a focus of several questions. At least 10 questions should be asked. This section is used primarily as a litmus test, where exceptional scores should be taken into account, but only a very poor score should preclude a candidate for final consideration by the panel. Below are some example questions:

Who is the current Education Secretary?	Who won the award for Best Album at the most recent Grammys?
What is the full name of Imperial College?	What telescope, launched in late 2021, is the largest optical telescope in space?
Which media mogul owns <i>The Sun</i> , <i>The Times</i> and <i>Fox News</i> , among others?	Name three plays by Shakespeare

Table 1: Example General Knowledge questions

5.2 Spelling Test

A perhaps belittling, yet essential, test of an Editor's written English. Around 10 questions should be asked, none of which should be especially hard or easy, and only an exceptionally low score should preclude a candidate from consideration. Again, examples below:

Environment	Espionage
Secretary	Inoculate
Scented	Nicaragua

Table 2: Example spelling test

5.3 Writing Test

This is the most intensive part of the selection process, and the most weight should be given to it in decision-making. Information about a made-up event will be given to each candidate in short bullet points in a random order. Each candidate will be given the same information, and will then have an hour to write a roughly 250 word news article on the event in question. This is the most important part of the selection process, and will test the candidate's ability to populate the news section, which they will have to do weekly. Assessment focus should be on the structure of the article and the omission of irrelevant information, as well as syntax and grammar. Ideally, the information given to the candidate will be more than 250 words, ensuring that they have to decide which information to include in their final piece. The candidate will also have to come up with a suitable headline. The final structure should follow an "information cascade" format, where the main point of the article is clear and conveyed in the first sentence, with secondary information and context added further down the page. The headline will convey the main point of the final article accurately, in as few words as possible, with bonus consideration for features such as alliteration or assonance.

5.4 Interview

The selection panel will conduct an interview with each candidate. This should be carried out in a semi-formal manner, where the candidate is encouraged to ask questions and a natural dialogue can be formed. It is important that the candidate is able to display how they communicate with people in a position of perceived authority, as this is likely to play a key part of their role in dealings with the College. Questions by the panel should seek to get a feel for the candidate's interest in student journalism, and gauge their bedside manner. Specific questions are at the discretion of panel members, and may cover topics such as conflict resolution, dealing with complaints, management style and organisational skills. Sycophancy should be treated negatively, as should aggression

and overly-hawkish responses to questions related to *Felix's* relationship with the College or the Union.