

ICU Review

Initial Findings

Note: These are **NOT** final recommendations

Review objectives

Enhance Democratic Engagement:

- Assess the effectiveness and accessibility of democratic processes.
- Focus on inclusivity

Evaluate Roles and Structures:

- Review the roles and responsibilities of elected positions, including full-time and part-time officers.
- Examine the effectiveness of student academic and welfare representation, liberation networks, and campaign structures.

Improve Representation Frameworks:

- Analyse ICU's mechanisms for policy development and democratic decision-making.
- Ensure robust systems are in place for clubs, societies, and other student-led initiatives.

Strengthen Advocacy and Influence:

- Build systems that allow ICU to be a trusted voice for students, effectively advocating for their needs.
- Focus on leveraging democratic structures for actionable and impactful representation.

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Our sources of insight

- Interviews
- Officer session
- ICU all-staff engagement session
- Council session
- 1:1 Interviews (approximately 40)
- Student survey (457 responses)
- IC Staff survey (open text)

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Five takeaways

- Student engagement in decision making – trust.
- Full time officer team make-up
- Council purpose and focus
- Policy Development and Insight
- Student communities engagement

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Trust

- Survey data revealed limited trust in Officer Trustees (OTs). Only 41% of students felt OTs were “somewhat representative,” while **49% believed they represented students “to very little” or “not at all”**.
- Student Councillors are integral to governance but are perceived as disconnected from grassroots representation. Only **18% of students strongly agreed that ICU Council decisions reflect their priorities**.
- Survey data highlighted strong trust in Academic Representatives, with **44% of students reporting that these roles represent them “to a great extent”**
- Only **21% of students agreed that ICU advocates effectively based on student experience data**. College stakeholders expressed frustration that ICU does not provide unique insights into student experiences that the College does not already know.
- Students expressed strong support for participatory decision-making
 - 67% preferred tools like polls and ballots
 - **82% wanted representatives to consult them before acting.**

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Officer roles and representation

- Move to a 4 or 5 officer team
- Bring postgraduate and international students specifically into portfolios
- Officer Trustee title

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Option	Team Composition	Strengths	Challenges
Integrated Model	President, VP Education, VP Welfare and Inclusion, VP Activities, Medical School President	Welfare and inclusion would address postgraduates and international needs.	Balancing autonomy and integration for the Medical School President as well as platforming international and postgraduate.
Postgraduate-Driven	President, VP Education and Advocacy, VP Welfare and Liberation, VP Activities, Medical School President	Postgraduate needs are more shifted to the education portfolio, with international sitting across aspects of welfare and education prioritised alongside medics and international students.	Requires effective communication across diverse constituencies.
Functional Priorities	President, VP Education, VP Welfare and Sustainability, VP Activities and Development, Medical School President	Functional focus ensures strategic and operational clarity while addressing unique concerns.	May require additional resourcing to support multiple functional areas. Has a sense of operational responsibility for officer portfolios that might be difficult to manage, especially in term so of delivery quality.

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Secondary portfolios

- Primary include Activities, Welfare and Education variations.
- Secondary would be agreed annually and would reflect the needs of the time, e.g. currently:
 - Postgraduate students
 - Sustainability
 - Business School engagement
- The need to be flexible – could be proposed at manifesto stage, could be allocated each year.
- Should also be driven by the Board on wider union needs, informed by the democracy.

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Liberation

- Clearly under development with excellent progress
- How to centre liberation voices in strategy and in governance
- Ensuring that there is flexibility in representation (2nd places)
- Ensuring there is prominence (policy development schedule, rotating chairs)
- Clubs and society engagement
- CU approach

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Council

Replace or consolidate existing governance structures with open forums before Council meetings to:

- Explore student concerns.
- Develop agendas and align policy schedules with officer priorities and institutional issues.
- Consider:
 - A smaller, more executive council; or
 - A broader, more liberation and academic balanced council which look and feel more like general meetings/forums; or
 - A sub-committee driven council

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Option A: Strategic slimming

- Membership:
 - President (Chair of Council).
 - Vice Presidents (Education, Welfare, Activities, etc.).
 - One representative from each Constituent Union (e.g., Medical School).
 - One representative each for key liberation groups (e.g., LGBTQ+, Women's, Black and Minority Ethnic students, etc.).
 - 2–3 elected student councillors (representing the wider student body).
- Focus:
 - High-level decision-making on strategic and policy priorities. Action-focussed, insight-informed. Wouldn't primarily be about making policy.
 - Improved accountability with structured performance reviews for officers and committees.
- Meetings:
 - Monthly or bi-monthly, focusing on progress updates, problem solving and strategy alignment.
 - Would require a strong annual, all student meeting to balance accountability.

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Option B: Participatory and Inclusive Model

- Purpose: Expand Council membership to ensure broader representation, including voices from all faculties, departments, and key student groups.
- Membership:
 - All current full-time and part-time officers.
 - Representatives from all departments or faculties (e.g., one Academic Rep per faculty).
 - A greater number of liberation officers to ensure inclusivity (second place representatives)
 - Representatives from specific interest groups (e.g., societies, sports teams, postgraduate students, and international students).
- Focus:
 - A **forum-style** body for comprehensive debate and feedback on policy proposals. Would be policy focussed, but on a schedule.
 - Broad representation ensures diverse input into major decisions.
- Meetings:
 - Frequent but themed, shorter meetings to facilitate engagement without overburdening members.
 - Would sit on a policy development schedule

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Option C: Thematic Council

- Purpose: Organise Council around key themes or priorities, with separate sub-councils or committees focusing on specific areas.
- Membership:
 - Main Council includes all full-time officers and Constituent Union representatives.
 - Sub-councils or committees for:
 - Academic matters (chaired by VP Education, including Academic Reps).
 - Welfare and inclusion (chaired by VP Welfare, including Welfare Reps and liberation officers).
 - Clubs and societies (chaired by VP Activities, with society and sports representatives).
 - Reports from sub-councils are submitted to the main Council for ratification where necessary.
- Focus:
 - **Delegated decision-making** in specialised areas.
 - Main Council handles inter-theme coordination.
- Meetings:
 - Sub-councils meet monthly; Main Council meets quarterly for strategic review.

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Forums and Policy Development

- A space is needed to reflect student desire to be a part of decision making, but not necessarily delivery.
- The shape and character of student voice differs by community, location, discipline etc.
- Forums would be present with each Council model but differ based on that model. The principle would be that Forums are a part of developing the agenda, being deliberative and consensus-driven.

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Insight and Policy Development

- The forums, and other bodies in the democracy, will be supported by insight from ICU's different points of contact with the membership.
- They will be one source of information which drives the policy development process.
- Provide structured data access to Student Councillors and part-time officers to improve their advocacy effectiveness.
- Create an annual or biannual Student Experience Report, consolidating feedback from Academic and Welfare Reps, liberation campaigns, and surveys.

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Constituent Unions

- Define formal agreements with Constituent Unions to clarify roles and responsibilities, ensuring alignment on strategic objectives.
- Adopt a union development approach to CUs
- Postgraduate representation in CUs
- Business School CU.

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Community Coordinators

- The Union could consider appointing community coordinators
 - students of a community appointed to do development work with all aspects of that community, from events, societies to academic engagement, on community organising principles.
- Increase staffing capacity to support liberation roles, Academic Reps, and data-driven advocacy.
- Consider student staff for otherwise career-staff roles and focus resources at manager level

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Business School

- Tailor engagement strategies for the Business School, addressing postgraduate needs and aligning operations with ICU's advocacy goals
- Mapping the school's representative structures across to ICUs is important to develop the needs of both the postgraduates and the new undergraduates.
- The community coordinator approach might be a bridge to this.

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Next steps

- You can ask questions!
- Draft a more formal report with recommendations
- Will eventually seek consent on the recommendations
- Then, where needed, draft appropriate byelaws etc for approval

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