

Imperial College Union
Governance Review Report
A Note by John Collins, IC Union President

Background

On August 8th the Executive established a Governance Review Working Party and tasked it to review the Union's governance procedures and processes. This review has involved over 30 volunteers and has involved experts and advisors from a range of professional backgrounds. The report, tabled as an appendix to this paper, will now go out for full consultation this October with a view to passing the first phase of constitutional changes in time for the College Council meeting on 24th November.

I would like to thank everybody who has worked on this project for their contributions and, in particular, I would like to thank Ben Harris, Jon Matthews and Hamish Common for writing this goliath report.

It should be noted that several controversial policies and ideas are proposed by this report. These policies have been highlighted in the report and will be put to the Council as separate items. The remaining consensual policies will be passed together in one item.

Council Resolves

1. To thank the people listed in the table below for their contributions to this project.
2. To discuss its proposals and recommend changes where appropriate.

Student contributors	Staff contributors	External contributors
Adele Peel Alex Guite Andy Sykes Ashley Brown Dan Sauder Danny McGuinness Emma Persky Eric Lai Jad Marrouche James Fok James Yearsley Katherine McGinn Mark Flower Nichola Hawkins Richard Fautley Shama Rahman Shiv Chopra Siddharth Singh Simon Matthews	Peter Haldane Dave Parry Robin Pitt Sue Bedford Rebecca Coxhead Phil Power	Daryn McCombe (Kings) Etienne Pollard (McKinsey) Hamish Common (23es) Jim Dickinson (NUS) Jimmy Tam (LSE) Rob Park (ULU)

Appendix

ICU Governance Review 2006 - Executive Summary

John Collins, September 2006

Introduction

This is probably the biggest governance project that ICU has ever conducted. Around 30 volunteers have put over 300 hours of discussion, research, consideration and work into this review and wrestled with issues ranging from Sabbatical Officers' pay to gender balance in Union meetings. In short, this project is anything but a "back-of-the-envelope" job.

It is important to emphasise that these proposals are just that; proposals. Nothing should be considered a *fait accompli* and the recommendations in this project will range from the consensual (abolition of the trading committees) to the controversial (introduction of general member votes on council).

The main report is not yet complete and at over 100 pages in length is too detailed for this meeting. Instead, a brief Executive Summary has been prepared that covers the key issues that have emerged during this review.

Findings from the review

Several weaknesses with the ICU governance system have been identified:

1. Council, Executive & SAC all behave like **mini-councils**. There is no clear differentiation between the legislature and Executive elements of the ICU governance structure.
2. There is a problem engaging the **middle management** of the Union in higher levels of the Union.
3. SAC's success in building a forum for clubs and societies has highlighted the lack of one for those more interested in **welfare and academic representation**.
4. **Lay members** (ordinary members) form a minority of the membership of the Union's governing body (Council); this is not considered good practice.
5. Most **procedural motions** can be off-putting and the role call vote is open to abuse.
6. Election appeals at Council simply don't work; an **independent body** is needed instead. Similarly, media complaints are not well managed.
7. Poor **performance** by Officers is rarely addressed.
8. The President can use the **constitutional interpretation** tool to make him or her very powerful.
9. Officers have no means of implementing their **manifesto pledges** without first going through committees.
10. The **Charity Bill** will increase the regulatory burden on the Union, and the College is using this as an opportunity to encourage the Union to formally become a College department.
11. Our Executive members are **personally liable** if anything goes wrong.
12. The **trading committees** are poorly attended and ineffective.

Recommendations

Separate power in the Union

- Create an **independent Court** to consider election disputes, media complaints and conduct judicial reviews.
- Transform **Council** into a **Representatives' Assembly** by removing all non Executive managers (CSCs, Faculty Officers, RAG, CAG, Welfare, and Equal Ops) and increasing the number of lay members (a.k.a. ordinary members).
- Move these officers (CSCs & Faculty Officers) to two powerful and well resourced "doing" committees:
 - **Representation & Welfare board** for representation, campaigns, halls and welfare officers to manage forums.
 - **Clubs Activities Board** for CSCs and FUs to run clubs.

Bring the students closer to the higher levels of the Union and College

- Create a **Rector's forum**: a meeting with the Rector in the hot-seat.
- Develop **web resources** to create a democracy home-page and allow students to second papers remotely.
- Cut back on **procedural motions**: they put students off Council.
- Transform **elections** from farces to festivals.

Give Officers resources to deliver; and hold them to account when they don't

- Give senior officers **personal budgets** to fund their own projects.
- Automatic **censure motions** for officers who fail to report to Council.
- Allow officers to be **publicly held to account** for their past conduct and effectiveness in office during election campaigns.

Move the Union away from committees towards forums.

- Abolish all but four **Presidential Committees**.
- Abolish all **trading committees** and replace them with a forum.
- Turn **CAG** into a non membership club.

Proposed committee structure

