

Staff-Student Protocol 2007

This revised SSP has been written for several reasons – some operational, some cultural. Hopefully the draft here will serve to better protect all students and staff within the Union, while also serving as the basis for the Union to “maximise the effectiveness of relationships and resources”¹.

Operational

The first step is to address operational issues, which occur in three main areas:

- 1) The status of Student-Staff, and their right to participate in the Union’s democratic structures.
- 2) The status of Sabbatical officers.
- 3) The relationships between full-time staff and the various guises students can take: customers, colleagues or officers offering democratic oversight.

The first point appears to be relatively straightforward: there is no reason that student staff should not participate in all areas of Union democracy. (This of course would exclude any future trustee board, but this exclusion is less to do with Union procedures and more to do with the finer points of charity law). However, there is a valid concern that Student-Staff could use the democratic structure to undermine their line managers. Therefore it is necessary to include clarifications to ensure that student staff do not raise any issues surrounding their employment in Union meetings.

One seldom observed fact regarding sabbatical officers is that they essentially hold two roles. One, as a democratic officer the same as any other; and two, as an employee of the Union who is entitled to the rights and protections afforded under HR law. What nobody is suggesting is that ordinary students are stripped of the right to remove sabbatical officers, but it is also apparent that other mechanisms need to be in place to help manage the performance of Sabbaticals. It is also worth bearing in mind the record Council has when it comes to disciplining Sabbs. While this issue is being dealt with by the governance review as a whole, the SSP should also contain reference to how Sabbs can be disciplined.

Finally we actually come on to staff. While the ultimate way to protect staff would be to completely isolate them from all students this is not particularly practical, nor is it viewed as best practice across the Student Union sector as a whole. We therefore need to strike a balance between allowing students and staff to work together in a positive environment and protecting staff from undue harassment, or the problems arise when different officers give conflicting instructions.

Culture

This addresses two issues, one that is genuinely cultural, and a second that is placed here because I feel unable to codify it fully at this stage. (This isn’t being lazy, I’m simply not particularly sure what we need, nor do I have any great expertise in HR.)

Firstly: I think the SSP has previously been used at Imperial as a toll with which to build a wall between students and staff and to stifle dissent. This inevitably leads to an untenable working situation. I believe that we should view the SSP more as a

¹ A New Staff Student Protocol: Discussion Document, R. Washington, 2005

guideline to promote effective co-operation between students and staff, and only fall back on its protective nature when needed.

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Secondly, it is obvious that there is little clarification as to what rights staff actually have. Previously the only reference was to the 'Personnel and Administrative Service Manual' – a now defunct College publication. In addition, I believe that referring to College's HR policy is unhelpful as it cannot reflect the needs and subtleties of a democratic organisation such as ICU. The only conclusion from this is that ICU must develop HR policies of its own – a task for future Sabbs perhaps. For this reason I have used the phrase 'relevant HR policy' throughout the SSP.

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STAFF/STUDENT PROTOCOL (The Relationship of the Elected Officers of ICU, its Committees and its Permanent Staff)

1. It is recognised that any officers elected by the student members of ICU are accountable to that membership, through the ICU Council, or through its committees. ICU staff are accountable through the line management structure to the General Manager and ultimately, through the President of the ICU, to the Board of Trustees.
2. The aim of this Protocol is to clarify the relationships between students, their elected representatives and staff. The document serves to provide protection to staff and the democratic processes of the Union, but also to promote an effective working environment.
3. The President of the ICU and the General Manager shall be responsible for ensuring all officers and members of staff are aware of this protocol.

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THE ROLE OF STAFF IN MATTERS OF ICU POLICY

4. The maintenance of the integrity of democratic practice within ICU precludes direct involvement of employed staff in matters of policy.
5. Staff shall at all times strive to uphold the policies, aims and objectives of ICU.
6. Staff members may attend meetings of any body of the ICU when invited or with the permission of the Executive.
7. Staff members may not exercise a vote in any Union meeting.
8. Staff members may advise officers of the ICU on any matter within their work area, but shall not in any other way seek to influence the policy-making process of the Union.
9. Staff members may not take part in public discussion of ICU policy nor give public expression to views contrary to ICU policy within the Union.
10. Staff members shall not comment on ICU policy to representatives of the media except to answer factual questions which come within their area of work.
11. Staff shall not involve themselves in any partial way in the election of any officers or representatives of the ICU.

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THE ROLE OF MEMBERS OF THE ICU IN EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

12. The maintenance of the integrity of the ICU as an employer precludes staff matters, either related to work or personal matters, from being discussed in any open forum of the Union. All matters relating to conditions of service, performance and conduct of members of ICU staff shall be dealt with by the General manager in consultation with the President of the ICU where appropriate
13. The officers of the ICU shall refer complaints about individual members of its staff to the President who will handle them in consultation with the Union Manager and in accordance with the line management structure of the Union.
14. The officers of the ICU shall not permit discussions relating to the conditions of employment, performance or conduct of members of its staff in articles, correspondence or other publications produced under the auspices of the Union.

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15. Officers of the ICU should be encouraged to make use of the staff support available, but shall not directly manage the work of individual staff members. In the event that an officer wishes to change the priorities of a staff member this should be done through the line management structure.

16. Complaints about individual members of staff raised by the general public, or by members of the Union while not on Union business, shall be addressed through the appropriate line management structure.

17. The General Manager, in consultation with the President of the ICU, shall ensure that the Union complies with current employment protection legislation and shall comply with best management practices in the treatment of its staff as detailed in the relevant HR policy.

18. Matters relating to ICU staff shall be considered within the context of the line management structure of the Union and, where necessary, in accordance with the relevant HR policy.

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SABBATICAL OFFICERS

19. Sabbatical officers shall be subject to the same scrutiny and discipline as any Union officer, subject to the relevant Union policies.

20. Additionally, the President of ICU may, at their discretion, seek to discipline Sabbaticals in line with HR policy on matters of conduct and performance.

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STUDENT STAFF

21. Student staff shall be free to take a full and active part in the democratic running of the Union, including full membership of all committees with the exception of the Board of Trustees.

22. Student staff may not raise any issue relating to their employment in any committee of the Union, but furthermore shall not be discriminated against for commenting on [areas of the union where they work].

23. Student staff shall be afforded the same protections as permanent staff members under this protocol.

24. Student staff should pursue any issue which arises in connection with their employment through the relevant line management structure, and in line with HR policy.

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ENFORCEMENT

25. The President of the ICU is ultimately responsible for the enforcement of this protocol and shall be responsible for clarifying the relationship between the ICU and members of staff.

26. Breaches of this protocol by Union staff shall be resolved through the line management structure, by the ~~General Manager~~ If the ~~General Manager is~~ implicated the President shall resolve the matter.

27. Breaches of this protocol by ICU members shall be resolved by the President through the appropriate disciplinary procedure(s). If the President is implicated the matter shall be referred to the Court of the ICU.

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