

Imperial College Union
Deputy President (Finance & Services) Council Report April 2013
A note by the DPFS – Stefan Nubert

Summer Ball

Summer Ball planning is well under way and tickets are on sale. Early bird tickets are selling well. The Commercial Services Manager (Matthew Bowman) and myself have met with a number of booking agents over the past few weeks. Having decided on a booking agent we are currently in the process of booking the main acts for the ball. Some acts are near finalised. The general organisation of the ball is going as planned and currently appears to be running somewhat below budget.

Commercial Services Restructure

The commercial services section (bars and entertainments) has undergone a major restructuring over the past few months. This has been a very long, but ultimately smooth process. The newly implemented structure will not only save the Union money, but also allow commercial services to operate more efficiently.

The aim of the restructure is fundamentally to improve the service the union provides in terms of the bars and entertainments. A review of the staffing structure was carried out. The previous structure did not lend itself to efficient operations, with separate, fragmented teams. This often resulted in inconsistent customer experience. The previous structure was fundamentally flawed and inflexible not allowing simple measures such as redeployment of staff between areas to cope with changes in demand. The Entertainments section has suffered from significant losses (although a loss leader) over the past 3 years, but can also be used to increase bar revenue if managed correctly.

The fundamental changes that are most significant and will be noticeable to students are the removal of the entertainments manager and bar operations team leader positions. New posts of venue manager and assistant venue manager have been created. The number of bar team leader positions has been reduced from 3 to 1 with a new title of duty bar manager for this remaining position.

The casual (student) roles of stewards and bar staff will be amalgamated into one team with proper cross training implemented. The restructure will result in one team, managed by a venue manager.

Changes have been made to the terms and conditions for the kitchen operations leader role. This will result in them working evenings, days and weekends, allowing for more consistency in the quality of food produced.

I was also part of the panel that interviewed the internal candidates for the 3 new roles, from which the positions of assistant venue manager and duty bar manager have been filled. We will be shortly advertising externally to begin recruitment for the position of venue manager.

Union Events

The commercial services manager and myself have met with a number of external event promoters. We are looking at trialing a number of events during the summer term. We are currently in discussion for running an indie rock night with one of the promoters from the Roxy. We are also in discussion for running an electronic drum and bass night with an event organizer who currently runs such events at venues such as Proud in Camden. We are currently trialing these types of events to offer new entertainments for our members but also to help with the promotion of events whilst commercial services is undergoing a restructure. There is no significant financial risk to ICU from these events.

Events Promotion Guidance For Students

The promotion of events externally to ICU is something that regularly takes place. With the new agreements with external promoters running events in Metric I have written a guidance document for the promoters to cascade to any Imperial students who work as promoters. This document has also been given to all the hall wardens for their viewing and their feedback has been received.

Cocktails

We are hoping to introduce a limited range (2-3) of basic cocktails in our South Kensington bars during summer term. I have written a detailed business plan for this proposal and have presented it to the commercial services manager. I have reviewed a number of models used by other venues, the potential risks, the actual costs and physical requirements involved and believe this is perfectly achievable for ICU provided we follow the correct model. The sabbatical team has also carried out a small amount of market research. We will be hoping they will be in place for the start of term. We are also looking to introduce other summer drinks offers.

Easter Carnival

Due to issues with having sufficient casual student staff available to work at the Easter Carnival I was required to work effectively as a senior steward for the event in addition to my regular working day. Even taking my inexperience with the role into account the event went well.

Finance Training Materials

I have written a new training document especially for VAT. This is a more in depth document than has traditionally been produced by ICU for its club officers. This is a result of the regular issues that students appear to encounter with VAT related issues and the questions I regularly receive. This will be contained as an appendix in the new financial training material for student officers. The document is currently with the Head of Finance (Malcolm Martin) for review.

I am also in the process of helping the Head of Finance review the internal financial manual, with specific reference to any changes over the past year, in preparation for an audit.

I was also the guinea pig for the test for the recruitment process for the new finance administrator role.

Receipts and Claims

One issue that club members may encounter is not having a proper itemized receipt with VAT details on it, but rather a basic till receipt with only a cost amount and number and total or just having the card receipt (as Starbucks give you). This often occurs with small independent shops or

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restaurants. I have spoken to the Head of Finance about changing the rules on this to implement a relatively low limit (£10-20) where a non-itemised receipt may be deemed acceptable and not queried. Currently the financial administrator queries all of these cases, causing possible delays for reimbursement. I am hoping to resolve this in the coming few weeks.

Leave

I was on leave for the 12 and 15 of April, along with the 3 of May.