



**Board of Trustees
One-Page Summary**

AGENDA ITEM NO.	11
TITLE	Communications Strategy
AUTHOR	Alex Mckee, Central Services Manager
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This strategy outlines the Union's approach to improving the way in which we communicate with our members and customers. It sets out strategic goals per theme from the Union's Strategy 2013-16, Our Plan, and is derived from work set out in SO9.
PURPOSE	The purpose of this strategy is to help us to communicate more effectively the Union's aims, goals and strategic themes. Although we don't need every single member of the Union to be fluent in our values, mission and vision – all our communication should be working towards them or communicating them. By developing a set of core communication themes and strategies with which to embed them we can help the Union towards achieving our plan for the next three years.
RISK IMPLICATIONS	Poor, unplanned communication could have reputational or financial risk to the Union. A reduction in usage of our services such as bars or engagement with our student activities would pose potentially high-risk issues for the Union.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	All expenditure is covered within budgets for this year or part of planned work in future years as set out by Our Plan.
LEGAL REVIEW REQUIRED?	No
DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED	Approval of the strategy

Communications Strategy

2014-16



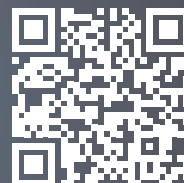
Introduction

As part of Our Plan, the Union's strategic plan for 2013-16, we committed to developing a Communications Strategy that would work in-line with our themes, aims and objectives. We have a number of channels of communication in use at the Union, and our audience, the vast majority of whom are our members, is wide and varied. Getting our communication right, both to and with our audience, is vital for us if we are to achieve all of our strategic targets over the next two years.

To create this Communications Strategy, we conducted internal and external research to see what our staff and members thought of our messages and communications. The results have led us to develop goals for the next two years that will allow us to better understand our audience and communicate more effectively.

For a digital copy of this report and accompanying information go online to

imperialcollegeunion.org/brand



All information correct at the time of going to print May 2014.

Executive Summary

This strategy outlines the Union's approach to improving the way in which we communicate with our members and customers. It sets out strategic goals per theme from the Union's Strategy 2013-16, Our Plan, and is derived from work set out in SO9.

Work with our members in the form of surveys and historic data alongside analysis of the views of our staff members and Student Officers were brought together to provide the basis of the strategy. Aims and measures from Our Plan 2013-16 defined many of our areas of focus and benchmarks for success.

The purpose of this strategy is to help us to communicate more effectively the Union's aims, goals and strategic themes. Although we don't need every single member of the Union to be fluent in our values, mission and vision – all our communication should be working towards or communicating them. By developing a set of core communication themes and strategies with which to embed them we can help the Union towards achieving our plan for the next three years.

The student voice is at the centre of what we do every day, representing our members views effectively to the College, local community and nationally. Improving how we do this and celebrating our successes and achievements is key to ensuring we are recognised for the work we do and that our members are proud of their Union.

Our communications should be consistent across the organisation, this includes Constituent Unions and student groups where appropriate. This is a particular area of focus which goes beyond the scope of a set of brand guidelines and is intrinsically linked with our values as an organisation.

Our unique ability to tailor communications based on a students interests, course or department should be an area of innovation and focus for us in the future. Our students are busy and ensuring they receive the most relevant information for them forms a strong base for our communications for the next three years.

In its essence there are five main themes we want our members to know and agree with:

- Imperial College Union is the voice for all students at Imperial
- Imperial College Union has a positive impact on my time at Imperial
- Imperial College Union plays a fundamental role in creating a positive student community at Imperial
- Imperial College Union is a not-for-profit charity
- Our members are proud to be part of Imperial College Union

By achieving all the goals set out in this strategy we will make huge strides towards making this Union the best it can be for its members, always reacting to their ever-changing needs.

Where we are now

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Lots of detailed data on each member's participation</p> <p>Good relationship with College Communications</p> <p>Lots of different things to talk about</p> <p>A lot of resources/materials at our disposal</p> <p>Ability to tailor comms with eActivities data</p> <p>Experience of Sabbatical Officers as students</p>	<p>Hard to capture everything that's going on</p> <p>Celebrating our successes</p> <p>Sometimes get caught in the 'Union bubble' and forget what students want to hear</p> <p>Lack of support give to Constituent Unions</p> <p>Difficulty measuring/understanding engagement/involvement</p> <p>Knowing what students are on which campus and when</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Engagement is increasing overall (memberships, elections)</p> <p>Need to be able to easily segment into different groups, e.g. campuses, in a club, etc.</p> <p>Support Constituent Unions and student groups in their communications – can we encourage/support them to produce content that helps deliver/uses language of our four strategic aims?</p> <p>Work closely with the ICSMCU to reach out to hospital sites</p>	<p>Too much saturation of info to students</p> <p>Email blindness/lost in volume of emails</p> <p>Low social media use relative to total number of members</p> <p>Extremely high number of messages to broadcast</p> <p>Campus student groups starting afresh every year</p>

This feedback shows that there are a number of areas that we are currently performing well in, and highlights a few key areas for us to consider more within the development of our communications going forward:

- Communicating to different groups within the student community
- Working with Constituent Unions
- Our communication channels and how we use them
- Finding out what students want to know about their Union

What do our members associate with 'the Union'?

We conducted some on-the-spot research with students based at the South Kensington campus.

We asked a number of students two questions:

- "What do you think of when you hear 'The Union'"
- "Did you know that the Union also runs...", giving them a list of services we provide.

We wanted to garner the most popular thoughts amongst some of the student body in regard to what the Union does, and how aware they were of the work that we do.

Out of all the students surveyed, the most popular answer to "What do you think of when you hear 'The Union'" was "FiveSixEight/Bar". There were 44 other suggestions in total which included "Student run", "Place to chill", "Shop" and "Where I go when I have issues". However, the answers that were given with most frequency were all based around our bars.

When students were then asked if they knew that the Union also provided a list of other services, 94% of students asked knew about our venues (e.g. FiveSixEight, Metric), yet under 50% knew that we ran an Advice Centre, had an Academic Representation Network or ran schemes such as Give It A Go and Imperial Plus.

Did you know that the Union also runs...

FiveSixEight/Metric etc.	94%
Freshers' Fair	85%
CSP	82%
Shop etc.	66%
Mini Buses	45%
Advice Centre	45%
Rep Network	32%
eActivities	29%
GIAG	20%
Imperial Plus	17%

Our Current Communication Channels

We use a number of tools to communicate to and with our members, and as part of the research for this strategy, we have analysed how effectively we use these tools to communicate to our audience. They fall into three main categories:

- Digital
- Print materials
- Face-to-face

Digital

WEBSITE

The Union's website, imperialcollegeunion.org, has grown in popularity since its redesign in 2012. The website is designed to give users the best possible experience and has all the information and functions our members need; from current news and events, to shopping and eActivities. It also allows for market expansion as there are no geographical boundaries and can be viewed anywhere and any time.

In terms of users, we believe there are two types – those that don't know that much about the Union and use our website as their first port of call, and those that understand our organisation. The website is, in many cases, the first interaction that members have with the Union, and it was recently been reviewed with teams in the Union to see how the information on it can be better displayed and accessed by our members.

As with our other online tools, our website is effective in communicating information instantly and we can react quickly to changes. Regular reviews will help ensure that it is easy for our users to find information and services, and help encourage visit to the Union in future.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is ideally used for short communications with its audience such as highlighting events and news on a daily basis.

We use a number of social media platforms for this purpose, these currently being Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. Students are also engaging in other social media platforms; platforms that might be worthwhile for us to join in order to reach them (e.g. Google+). As of April 2014, we have approximately 7,800 likes on our main Facebook page, and over 3,800 followers on Twitter. Out of these high numbers of followers, some of them may no longer be current students of the College, yet still engaging with our posts. In order for our social media to be more effective, we need to look at our social media audience, and discern how many current students are engaging with us. We also need to look at how to create more proactive and engaged users;

those that retweet our Twitter posts and share our Facebook posts will help us increase our reach amongst the student community at the College.

Social media is effective in communicating information instantly and is a good way to broadcast to an audience that has shown an active interest in the Union. We have recently been more proactive in responding to any questions, comments and queries, both sent privately and posted publicly, and think this needs to continue in order to maintain a good relationship with our followers. We also need to have engaging information in order to capture our followers and to ensure that our information doesn't get lost amongst other posts from their friends and other organisations they may follow.

E-NEWSLETTERS

Imperial College Union generally sends out one e-newsletter a week to all Undergraduates and Postgraduate students. Each email is tailored to each group, and contains information and news, which is usually time, bound to events happening around the time the email is sent.

Email marketing is effective in sending out information to a wide audience quickly and is very cost effective for us at the Union, as the emails are sent through the College network. However, there is no way to measure how many of our e-newsletters are being received, opened and read with the current system that we use. This would be an area of investigation for us, providing insight into how effective this tool is, and what pieces of information are the most engaging.

LED SCREENS

We currently have eight LED screens in the Union Building, located in key points in the building. As we continue to develop more spaces in the College we will look to install more.

Print materials

We regularly produce a number of printed materials, such as posters, flyers, booklets and Felix, our student newspaper.

The distribution of our print material varies depending on its purpose, e.g. a booklet produced for a one-off event will only go to the attendees, whereas a leaflet produced for our Summer Ball will be distributed to all of the student body at different points on campus. Print that is distributed to students at large is done so in high footfall areas for maximum exposure to our members.

We feel that our printed materials are effective in reflecting the core messages of Our Plan, and looking consistent with all Union branded materials. However, it is hard to gauge how effective it is

in engaging our members and how they react to it when they do. The one area we can take some measurement from is our Welcome Week communications, when our student handbooks are mailed directly to incoming students before they arrive. In our 2013 Welcome Week survey, 88% said that they were happy with the materials given to them before they arrived at the College, which included our Student Handbooks. A task to consider would be to find ways to measure the effectiveness of our print communications at other times of the year.

Face-to-face

Another important tool for us is face-to-face communication. This allows us to have physical interaction with our members and vice versa, giving members the opportunity to put a face to organisation. Face-to-face interaction is a great way to ask members questions directly, get information straight into their hands and makes the organisation more human and friendly. At present, we utilise this quite infrequently and would look to do more of this in future, particularly to gather further information about our student community.

Understanding our Membership

Students at Imperial College London can engage with the Union in a number of ways, both directly in our building and in the outside world. Between January 2013 and January 2014, 74% of students engaged with the Union in some respect. This could be in a number of ways, e.g. coming to one of our events, buying items from one of our shops, using our website to purchase a membership, being involved as a volunteer. This implies that, regardless of whether they realise it or not, a high percentage of our members are already engaged with us at a variety of levels. Taking this into consideration, we have created a number of types to help define who are members are:



Inactive

Doesn't use the Union, barely knows anything about it and what it does, perhaps chooses not to engage.



Unknown

Uses the Union facilities and services, attends an event, etc. but isn't aware that it's the Union behind it.



Passive Participant

Attends things as and when they can. Attends events that aren't member specific.



Receptor

Reads our emails, social media, Felix.



**Active
Participator**

Regularly attends events, member of a Club, Society or Project, perhaps competes for a team.



Initiator

Starts a campaign, starts a CSP, regularly suggests ideas and improvements, gets to know people at the Union, e.g. Sabbs, staff.



Consumer

Uses the bars and shops to varying degrees.



Employee

Works at the Union part-time to supplement their income during their degree.

Due to the range of activities and services we provide, it is unlikely that members are only ever just one type. There are a number of combinations that we think our members could be, for example:

PP + R + C = a student who comes to a few events and reads our weekly newsletter to see what's going on

PP + C = a student who has a drink in the bar every once in a while with their friends

AP + In + C = someone who joined a club in their first year, is now a committee member, and socialises with their Club or Society every week in FiveSixEight

AP + In = a student who is an active member of RAG, and has suggested one of the charities that they fund-raise for this year

AP + E + C = is a member of the Rugby team, works as a steward and goes to the bar with friends from the Rugby club and/or other students that work in the bar

These combinations might have other factors attached to them, e.g. being an International student or studying at another campus far from our base in South Kensington. Additionally, we have yet to discover how many of members fall into each type, and what we can do as the Union to help convert those who are less and passively engaged, into Active Participators. These elements are very much unknown and form part of the work that is to be carried out as a result of this strategy.

Our Key Communication Messages

Our Values

Excellent

The Union strives to deliver first class services and experiences for its members, and works with the College to ensure that the student experience at Imperial is second to none.

Inclusive

The principles of equality of opportunity are fundamental to the Union - we promote diversity, take action on discrimination and strive for an inclusive and welcoming environment for our increasingly diverse student community.

Innovative

We are bold and different – we constantly look for new ways of improving the student experience, whether directly through the Union or through the lobbying of the College and external bodies.

Democratic

The principle of student leadership is fundamental to the Union. At all levels students are empowered to influence and change the workings of the Union and their educational experience.

Our Vision

To be recognised as the leaders in student development and engagement, at the heart of the student community at Imperial.

Our Mission

Imperial College Union prepares its members to be tomorrow's leaders, by defending and enhancing the student experience at Imperial, through the provision of innovative services, representation and activities.

Our Key Communication Themes

Imperial College Union is the voice for all students at Imperial

The Union is the legal and democratic union for all students at Imperial College London. We campaign and lobby in the College, locally and nationally on issues that affect our members as students. We have a vast network of 2,500+ elected student officers who ensure our members' voices are heard at all levels of the College.

Imperial College Union has a positive impact on my time at Imperial

Our aim is for our members' time at the College to be the best it can be. Every day we are working for each of our 16,000+ members to improve Imperial both academically and non-academically.

Imperial College Union plays a fundamental role in creating a positive student community at Imperial

The Union is fundamental in welcoming every student at Imperial to the College. We are proud of the diverse, inclusive and non-discriminatory student community at the College and we take positive action to promote and defend this.

Imperial College Union is a not-for-profit charity

Every service we run and every decision we make is based on what is best for our members. Every penny we earn from our commercial outlets is put straight back into services that benefit our members. We don't measure success just on the bottom line of our accounts, we measure success based on the impact we have had on our members' lives.

Our members are proud to be part of Imperial College Union

We want our members to be excited to be part of one of the most diverse, vibrant and innovative students' unions in the UK. The best advocates for our organisation and our services should be those that use them. If we are doing our job right, our members will say so and spread the word.

▲ Enhancing the

Student Experience

▲ Imperial College Union plays a key role in how students learn, develop and grow during their time at the College, especially through the skills that they learn through involvement in our activities.

Our Clubs, Societies & Projects are amongst the biggest and best in the UK and we will continue to develop them. We also want to grow the scope of our activities to ensure that students can access the widest range of development opportunities possible.

We will also maximise the benefits of involvement to help our members identify, develop and exemplify the skills they have developed through their involvement, enhancing their employability and widening the scope of their career options.

▲ Strategic Aim



By 2016 we will be recognised by the College, our membership, and by external measures as providing a fundamental part of the student experience at the College.

▲ Goals - By 2016 we will:

- CSE1 ▼ Increase our members' awareness of the Union and our values.
- CSE2 ▼ Improve our members' welcome to the College by playing an integral role in the organisation and planning of Welcome Week and pre-arrival communications.
- CSE3 ▼ Increase our members' awareness of the Union's services, both commercial and non-commercial.
- CSE4 ▼ Introduce termly feedback sessions to determine what is most important to our members, using the results to improve our services and how we communicate them.
- CSE5 ▼ Review our social media presence, gaining knowledge of how many students are engaging with the different services and how we can grow the number of interactions and conversations we have with our members.
- CSE6 ▼ Review the effectiveness and appropriateness of our printed communications to both new and continuing students during each year of the plan.
- CSE7 ▼ Introduce a plan to review and develop the Union website to be easily accessible, clearer to navigate and relevant to our members; ensuring each section of the site is reviewed at least yearly.

We will know we have succeeded when:

- At least 85% of student agree that the Union has had a positive impact on their time at the College in the Union Survey.
- Over 75% of students are satisfied or better with the communication they received from the Union before starting at the College in the Union Welcome Week Survey.
- Page views of the Union website increase by 10% in each year of the plan.

▲ Amplifying the

Student Voice

One of our primary functions is to represent our members to the College and to the wider community. We have recently developed a strong reputation in developing detailed, evidence-based research on behalf of our membership and we will grow and enhance the impact of this work.

In order to evolve further we must develop students' ability to affect our campaigning activity and continue to develop our communication loops to ensure that students are aware of changes that have been made on their behalf.

Our representative role is not limited to the College, however, and we must ensure that students' voices are heard locally and nationally. The Union should be champions for teaching, research and feedback, and play a key role in helping the College improve students' experiences in this area.

▲ Strategic Aim



By 2016 the Union will have played a demonstrable role in improving the educational and non-academic experiences of our members through effective campaigning, lobbying and research.

▲ Goals - By 2016 we will:

- CSV1 ▲ Increase the awareness amongst our membership of student-led campaigns.
- CSV2 ▲ Produce, in conjunction with all Union departments, evidence-based response documents ensuring they are well promoted amongst our members and key stakeholders including College staff and academics.
- CSV3 ▲ Increase the number of examples of positive changes made by the Union and the College as a result of campaigning, lobbying and student feedback in the 'You Said, We Did' section of the website.
- CSV4 ▲ Produce a termly Impact Report with accompanying website that highlights the range and breadth of changes and work completed by the Union through the work of officers, representatives and initiatives.
- CSV5 ▲ Review our approach to how we promote the role of our Sabbatical Officers in our communications ensuring they are viewed as accessible by our members and that they understand their position in the organisation.
- CSE6 ▲ Increase the engagement in our democratic systems and structures all year round, not just during election periods.

We will know we have succeeded when:

- At least 70% of students agree that the Union is the voice of students at Imperial in the Union Survey.
- We remain in the top ten students' unions in the UK for election turnout.
- Page views of our Impact and You Said, We Did sections of our website increase by 10% during each year of the plan.

▲ Building a

Student Community

▲ The Union should be the hub of the Student Community – ensuring that students are happy in their surroundings; feel supported by their peers and can seek advice when they need to.. The Union believes that the student community should be diverse, welcoming, non-discriminatory and inclusive, and will take positive action to promote and defend this.

The Union currently plays an important role in welcoming students to the College, but this experience needs to be improved and the Union should be at the heart of these changes.

The Union also recognises that the Student Community is constantly changing, both in terms of the demographics of our members, and their needs, demands and experiences. The Union must continually change to reflect this and remain at the heart of the Student Community.

▲ Strategic Aim



By 2016 the Union will be at the centre of the Imperial Student Community, ensuring that the Union and College are a welcoming place for our diverse membership.

▲ Goals - By 2016 we will:

- CSC1 ▼ Communicate the impact of the work we do every day with our members, focusing on our successes through campaigning and lobbying by producing an Advocacy to Action report.
- CSC2 ▼ Publish more stories about our members, and the groups they are in, who have benefited from being involved with the Union through news stories and student profiles on the website.
- CSC3 ▼ Increase the number of day-to-day interactions we have with our members through social media.
- CSC4 ▼ Increase our presence on other social media platforms, understanding and adapting to where our members are.
- CSC5 ▼ Support our Constituent Unions in their communications. Helping their committees to improve their start-of-session handbooks and promotional material throughout the academic year.
- CSC6 ▼ Conduct research into the demographics of our proposed Audience Types to better understand the Student Journey of our members and plan more effective communication to them.
- CSC7 ▼ Harness our membership data to enable us to tailor our communication for each student group, cohort or 'tribe'. Creating more tailored communications to target different sections of the student community, opening up communication between them and the Union.

We will know we have succeeded when:

- At least 70% of students agree that the Union plays a fundamental role in creating a positive student community in the Union Survey.
- We build our engaged social media users in each year of the plan by 15%.
- We publish our first report into student journeys and their changing demographics, trends, behaviours and needs of our members.

▲ Creating a

Sustainable Organisation

▲ In order to achieve our Strategic Goals, we must ensure that the foundations of the Union are strong. We must protect and develop our financial and human resources and develop our central support and communication functions to ensure that our services flourish.

Our reputation with the College, our primary funder and a key stakeholder, is predicated on sound financial and operational management, and our reputation with our members, our primary stakeholder, is predicated on providing relevant and well-run services.

The Union's people are its most valuable asset and the Union needs to become an organisation that attracts, rewards and retains the best people.

▲ Strategic Aim



By 2016 Imperial College Union will be recognised as a Union that is financially sound, is a great place to work, and makes the most of the resources that are available to it.

▲ Goals - By 2016 we will:

- CSO1 ▼ Support the work detailed across other areas of the Union strategy and operating plans, including the Campus Outreach strategy, to help ensure they achieve their aims and objectives.
- CSO2 ▼ Develop and launch Customer Promises for all external and internal services at the Union and review during each year of the plan.
- CSO3 ▼ Continue to develop the Union's relationship with College communications ensuring that the Union's strategic aims and objectives are communicated in College marketing material where possible.
- CSO4 ▼ Achieve over 1,000 respondents to the annual Union Survey in each year of the plan, delivering analysis and recommendations on the results to the Union's departments.
- CSO5 ▼ Introduce a 'mystery shopper' metric for our commercial outlets producing regular reports and feedback to the managers of those areas.
- CSO6 ▼ Ensure all of our Sabbatical Officers, staff and student officers are trained on our key communication messages and how to effectively convey them.
- CSO7 ▼ Develop effective feedback channels for all of our services so that our members can help us continually improve our services and offers.
- CSO8 ▼ Develop a yearly sales plan for all of our media opportunities in order to maintain and increase income during each year of this plan.
- CSO9 ▼ Improve relationships and communication channels with our Associate Members and Life Members, developing regular newsletters and dedicated sections of our website for them.

We will know we have succeeded when:

- We have increased the income from advertising by 5% during each year of the plan.
- At least 75% of students are satisfied or better with the Union's Commercial Outlets in the Union Survey.
- We have increased the number of Associate Members and new Life Members joining the Union during each year of the plan.

Imperial College Union

Beit Quadrangle
Prince Consort Road
London
SW7 2BB

Registered Charity No: 1151241

Tel: 020 7594 8060
Fax: 020 7594 8065
Email: union@imperial.ac.uk
Twitter: @icunion

imperialcollegeunion.org

