

Major Events Restructure

Paper to Finance & Risk Committee

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Summary

Imperial College Union's 375 Clubs, Societies and Projects (CSPs) run well organised, predominantly student-led events, most of which are successful and sit in the correct level of authorisation. Events exceeding £10,000 expenditure are in need of more consistent oversight and increased staff support. The proposed structure in this paper provides improvements to the current offering we have to develop students' transferable skills and practical experience in event management. This paper serves to formalise a staff-student support structure for major event planning and management.

Background and motivation

Event budgets are created by student volunteers to help them understand and record fixed and variable expenditure and income. They are generated to support volunteers in planning budgets and help to ensure events do not run at a loss. They also provide the Union a certain level of risk mitigation, particularly where Union staff or Officer Trustees are unable to oversee them. It is assumed that students will have read the training manual and will have undertaken some research on their event in regard to its viability. Attendance numbers may be guessed at without evidence, for example. Historical or annual events are good markers for whether an event will succeed, but this information is not always made known to the new committee in advance. By segregating the major events with expenditure exceeding £10,000 and initiating this structured process, we can firstly solve the major events oversight problem, and then use the documents appended to train the Management Group Chairs and Vice-Chairs to provide support to the Officer Trustees (DPCS and DPFS) for events in the next level of expenditure authorisation (£1,000-£10,000).

With a database of previous budgets, their operating plans and detailed feedback at the end of each year, it will be easier to test financial and reputational risk in advance, as well as provide a greater level of assurance to the Finance and Risk committee before approving high levels of expenditure.

Guidelines for Timeline and To-Do List:

The To-Do list and Timeline are Appendixed (A and B) and a list of major events that they should be used for in future is added in Appendix C. The process takes the event from budget submission, through the planning stages, execution and evaluation. Steps that require further information are the operating plan submission and the contingency stages.

Operating Plans

Must be signed off by the CSP, the DPFS and the Head of Finance and Resources. For events with expenditure over £50k it must also be ratified by the Finance and Risk committee. The operating plans must include answers to the following questions:

1. Has this event been run before?
2. Is this a charity fundraising event?
3. Do you want to apply for VAT Exemption status?
4. Will you have foreign performers at the event?
5. Will you have external speakers?
6. Will you be hiring College/Union space?
7. Have you used this venue before?
8. Will you be looking for sponsorship for this event?
9. Have you considered health and safety requirements for this event?
10. Have you submitted a risk assessment for this event?

The operating plans should further demonstrate considerations of the following: Marketing/promotions schedule, event itinerary and logistics for the day, dietary requirements, lighting/sound/stage set up, visas, performer documentation, HMRC regulations, tax requirements, health and safety, risk assessments, seating plans.

Cancellation/Contingency

Information and Recommendations

Once a CSP begins with expenditure, decisions need to be made at various milestones with respect to upscaling or downscaling the event depending on how successful ticket sales are. Often, expenditure needs to be approved at short notice, and it doesn't always match the budget which requires further insight from the CSP. Recommendations to address these issues are:

- Ticket sales are not doing as well as anticipated: downscale expenditure where possible, e.g. choose a cheaper supplier that can deliver a more basic service, or make a decision as to whether the service is necessary for the event to be a success, e.g. pick a cheaper lighting technician, or remove balloons from the list of decorations. This is also where contingency included in the budget becomes more important, as all of the offered services may be vital to the success so the CSP will need to draw from the contingency funds defined in the initial budget.
- Ticket sales are doing better than anticipated, the CSP want to edit and upscale the expenditure: Meeting with MERC and advice from F&R via email. Aim to maintain expenditure unless there is a clear case for upscaling directly correlating with increased profit, student engagement/satisfaction or other merit.

Cancellation Criteria

- Initial numbers assessment (stage 5) - setting a lower bound for forecasted ticket sales. Explicitly define the attendance number that makes the event break even. This number must be hit by a set deadline.
- Define the cancellation deadline (stage 5 defines stage 10) based on contractual obligations, i.e. venue hire cancellation terms and conditions, ticketing vendor refund limits.
- Mitigation (stage 9), upscaling/downscaling depending on attendance number reached by the contingency stage. Making a decision as to whether the event should be cancelled or can be downscaled in time.

Staff Requirements

Relevant Support

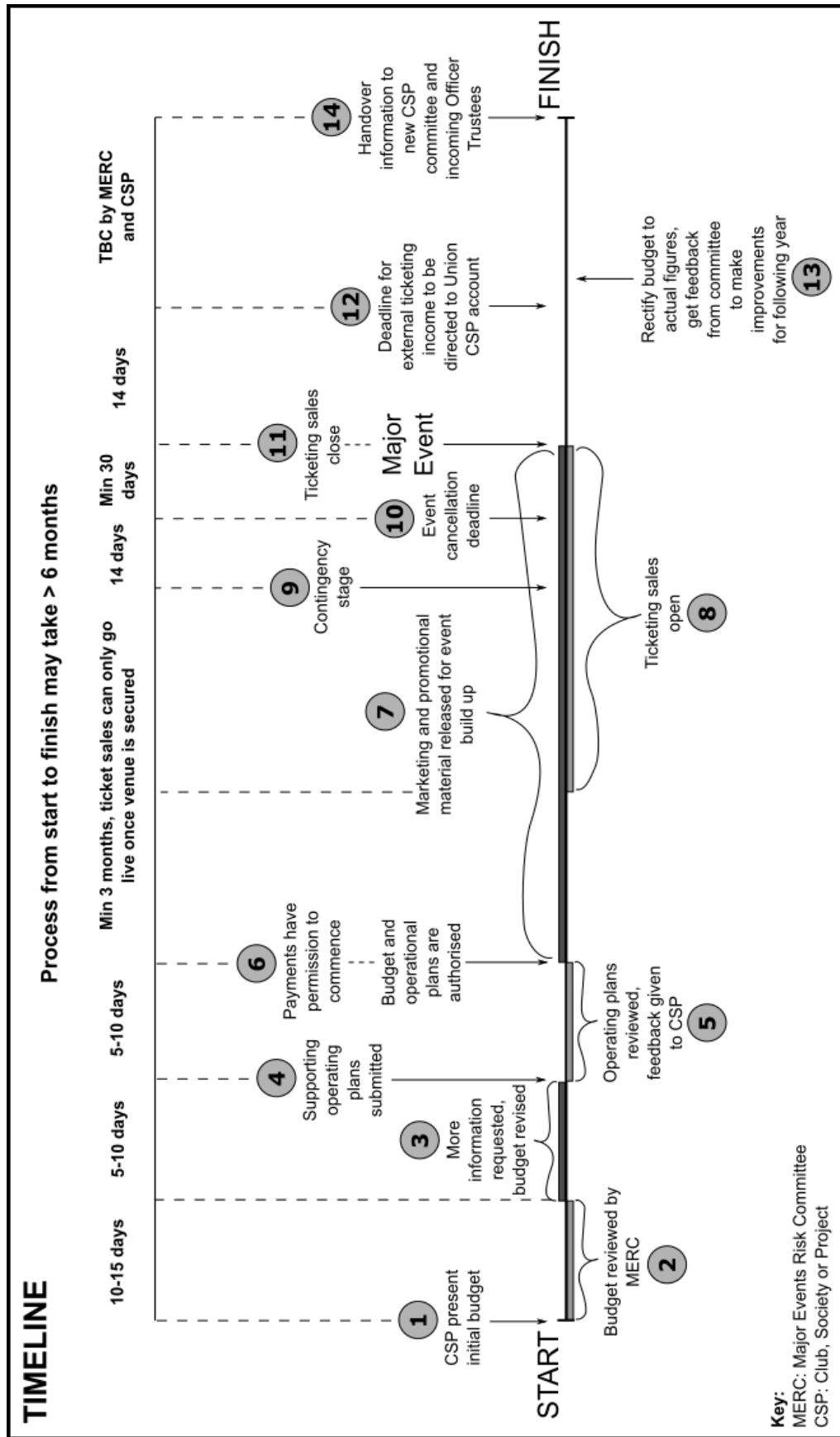
The following is a list of support links within the Union that the CSP can access when they need help. It forms the basis of the Major Events Risk Committee (MERC):

- Deputy President (Finance and Services)
- Deputy President (Clubs and Societies)
- Head of Finance and Resources - Financial and reputational risk associated with the event, legal requirements.
- Finance Administrator
- Student Activities Manager - Recommendations and initial adjustments on the event budget, logistics.
- Student Activities Coordinator

Appendix A: To-Do List Template

TO-DO LIST		Done	Dates added in advance to Outlook Calendar
1	CSP present initial budget	Budget received: <input type="checkbox"/>	10-15 days
		Budget number: # _____	_____ / _____ / _____
2	Budget reviewed by relevant committee	Expenditure: £ _____ Committee: MER / F&R	5-10 days
		Reviewed: <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ / _____ / _____
3	Need more budget details	Financial information requested: <input type="checkbox"/>	5-10 days
4	CSP submit supporting operating plans	Plans received: <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ / _____ / _____
5	Operating plans reviewed	Date added to calendar: <input type="checkbox"/>	5-10 days
		Timeline approved: <input type="checkbox"/>	
		*Cancellation details agreed: <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Reviewed: <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Returned: <input type="checkbox"/>	
<p><i>*Cancellation details must consider:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cancellation deadline as per the venue hire contract 2. Refunds policy of the ticketing vendor 3. Expected attendance numbers and ticket sales 			
6	Authorisation and expenditure*	Budget authorised: <input type="checkbox"/> Operating plans authorised: <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ / _____ / _____
<p><i>*Any expenditure for the event must reference the budget number with the transaction. All CSP transactions should be monitored by the Management Group Chair, Vice-Chair, and the DPFS</i></p>			
7	Marketing and promotion	Marketing department notified: <input type="checkbox"/> Promotional material distributed: <input type="checkbox"/>	Min 3 months, ticket sales can only go live once venue is secured
8	Ticketing sales	Ticket sales begin: <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ / _____ / _____
9	Contingency stage	Meeting between CSP and MERC: <input type="checkbox"/> Ticket sales and attendance checked: <input type="checkbox"/>	14 days
10	Cancellation deadline	Break even reached or expected to reach: Y / N	14 days
<p><i>If cancellation is necessary: all parties involved must be notified immediately</i></p>			
11	Day of the event	Ticketing sale ends, income forecast: <input type="checkbox"/>	Min 30 days
12	Income deadline	All income returned to Union CSP account: <input type="checkbox"/>	14 days
13	Evaluation stage	CSP provide feedback to MERC: <input type="checkbox"/>	CSP and MERC to decide after event has taken place
		DPFS provides feedback to MERC: <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Compare budget to actual figures: <input type="checkbox"/>	
14	Handover	DPFS / MERC, new and current CSP meeting: <input type="checkbox"/>	_____ / _____ / _____

Appendix B: Theoretical timeline for all events



Appendix C: List of major events to consider for 2018, all of which are the major events (>£10k for 2016-17)

EVENT	DATE	VENUE	CSP	GROSS INCOME (£)	GROSS EXPENDITURE (£)	PROFIT/LOSSES (£)
Freshers' Fortnight 2016	03/10/2016	Reynolds	ICSMSU Exec (655)	20,550.00	17,709.5	1,910.17
Halfway Dinner 2016	15/10/2016	Royal Garden Hotel	ICSMSU Exec (655)	16,597.50	16,557.00	165.00
CGCU Welcome Ball	20/10/2016	Porchester Hall, Bayswater	CGCU Exec (600)	14,480.00	14,431.59	-148.83
International Trauma Conference	19/11/2016	Sir Alexander Fleming Building	ICSMSU Surgical Soc (699)	17,575.00	14,297.50	2,731.25
ChemSoc Christmas Dinner 2016	13/12/2016	The Copthorne Tara	RCSU Chemistry (633)	12,250.00	12,196.40	944.66
STFYD 2017	07/01/2017	Brewery London	ICSMSU Exec (655)	34,360.00	33,937.20	352.33
The Bhangra Showdown 2017	11/02/2017	Eventim Apollo	SCC Punjabi (289)	79,656.00	48,900.00	25,630.00
Sapphire	04/03/2017	Hilton London Metropole	OSC Sri-Lankan (321)	37,700.00	30,830.00	11,758.33
Science Challenge	21/03/2017	Old Royal Naval College	RCSU Exec (730)	13,000.00	11,992.95	172.54
Chemistry Finalist Dinner 2017	06/06/2017	Royal Society of Chemistry London	RCSU Chemistry (633)	15,200.00	16,624.28	179.76
Barbados Tour	02/07/2017	Barbados	ICSMSU Cricket (661)	15,886.00	15,886.00	0

Example - The Bhangra Showdown

The Bhangra Showdown ran its tenth annual event this year, and is looking to run for an eleventh time in 2018. This section will outline how successful the event has been for the past five years, highlighting issues that arose, things that went well and outstanding areas for concern.

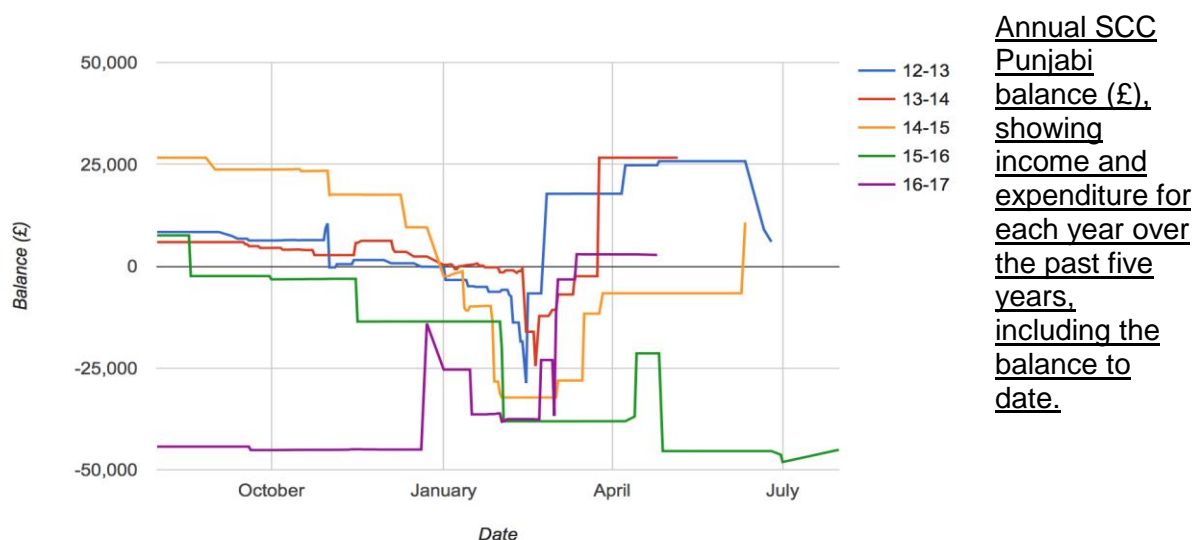


Table defining yearly opening and closing balances for SCC Punjabi.

Year	Balance (£)	
	Opening	Closing
2012-13	8,381.64	5,971.88
2013-14	5,901.04	26,631.82
2014-15	26,631.82	10,791.03
2015-16	10,791.03	-45,093.50
2016-17	-45,093.50	2,747.80*

*Current balance

Income and expenditure over the past five years has been sporadic and inconsistent. It depends completely on the support of the DPFS and the reliability of the CSP committee, both of which change each year and valuable knowledge of the major event process is lost. The aim of the new structure is firstly to make the balance profile more regular and therefore easier to monitor; and is secondly necessary to ensure the knowledge is retained in the Union, making future event planning more efficient.

Issues for 2015/16 and 2017

- Funds withheld by NEC as FEU documentation was not processed in time.
- 80% of previous year's ticketing income sent back to the Union from the NEC, remaining 20% retained by HMRC.
- Resolved by frequent communication with various stakeholders: HMRC, Foreign Performers Manager, Accountant, previous year SCC Punjabi committee.