

Motion for Union reform

Proposer: Ansh Bhatnagar (FoNS UG Rep to Council)

Seconders: Shervin Sabeghi (RCSU VPWW 18-19), Rhidian Thomas (Ethics and Environment Officer 17-18)

Union Notes:

1. Union Council is the main representative body of the Union. Its job is to set policy, mandate student leaders to carry out certain actions or campaigns, and to hold them accountable.
2. In recent times some actions and mandates have not been carried out, such as the implementation of the petitions system, the implementation of a voter registration tab in the Student e-Service, and consultation for the Social Mobility Liberation Officer – despite data showing that Imperial is the most unequal university in England. [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
3. Despite recent efforts to publicise Council meetings, non-voting member turnout has been low.
4. Schemes are often implemented by Officer Trustees without any approval from Council, the main representative body of the Union, and also without wide-ranging student consultation (recently Meat-Free Monday, ICXP, WBRN, etc.) [2]
5. Students have expressed dissatisfaction with the way the Union has been run, taking to online forums to relay their concerns. [8]
6. The majority of student members are either unaware of Council, or believe it achieves very little change.
7. Democracy is one of the core values of the Union. [1]

Union Believes:

1. The policy passed by what is meant to be the main representative and legislative body of the Union should not be ignored.
2. The failure of certain Council mandates to be carried out calls into question the effectiveness of the body and the Union structures in their current form.
3. Student complaints regarding the Union's systems should be done via the correct channels and using the proper procedure, however the growing online discontent regarding the Union should not be ignored.
4. A truly democratic Union will have its members leading the way in determining its policy, and should be structured using a bottom up rather than a top down approach.
5. Currently the Union operates in a top down approach, with the sabbatical officers having the most control, then Council (in principle), then members collectively having almost no control.
6. With the indefinite delay of the petitions system, there is no real way in the near future for members to make their voice heard and determine the course of the Union, with the exception of the elections.
7. Democracy is more than just voting during elections and then sitting back – it should be happening all the time around the year.
8. The Union's existing structures should be scrutinised.
9. We should strive for a more democratic, transparent, and member-led Union, and should be free to propose major improvements.
10. Any proposed changes to the Union's structure should be carefully considered by a group of student representatives *as well as* a large group of non-voting student members.

Union Resolves:

1. To form a working group that is open to all Union members.
 - a. The aim of the working group would be to “Scrutinise the current structure of the Union, and analyse its strengths and weaknesses. Determine where it is flawed and use this information to come up with a more democratic, transparent, and member-led structure for the Union.”
2. To mandate the Union President to ensure the working group is publicised both to a wide range of student representatives (Council members, academic and wellbeing reps, CSP committee members, etc.) as well as ordinary Union members.
3. To mandate the working group to return with a proposal to Council by the end of the Academic Year 2018/19.

References:

- [1] <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run>
- [2] <http://felixonline.co.uk/articles/2018-02-15-the-state-of-the-union-to-consult-or-not-to-consult/>
- [3] https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/17-18/Union_Council/file/4503
- [4] https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/17-18/Union_Council/file/4487
- [5] https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/17-18/Union_Council/file/4193
- [6] https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/17-18/Union_Council/file/4486
- [7] <http://felixonline.co.uk/articles/2018-01-26-imperial-most-unequal-university-in-england-union-council-rejects-motion-for-social-mobility-officer/>
- [8] <https://www.facebook.com/icxposed/>