



**Imperial College Union Board of Trustees**  
**8 July 2020**

<b>AGENDA ITEM NO.</b>	13
<b>TITLE</b>	Interim MD Report
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Graham Atkinson, Interim Managing Director
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<p>At the time of writing, it has been seven weeks since the last Board. The key theme of the last two months has been around continuing to navigate as effectively as possible through the Covid-19 crisis. This has included maximising our use of the government furlough scheme as well as ongoing work around budgets and our core staffing model. This has taken place alongside work to ensure that our preparation for the new academic year is on track.</p> <p>It has been a challenging two months and will continue to be for senior management, staff and officers. The coming months continue to bring enormous risk for the Students' Union, whilst at the same time presenting significant opportunity. There are talented staff, outstanding student officers and a genuine chance to reinvent our services in a way that is innovative and in line with the needs of students</p>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	To set out a summary of progress against the Interim Plan over the last seven weeks and highlight key issues / opportunities for the Board.
<b>DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED</b>	To approve.

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a short narrative overview of my work, outcomes, challenges and progress in relation to the interim management project at Imperial College Union. It should be read alongside the interim plan and is designed to summarise progress against, as well as alerting the Board to any other strategic issues arising since the last Board.

## 2. Overview of Work To Date

Since the last Board at the end of February, I have undertaken an additional 21-days' work for the Students' Union. My work to date includes:

- Continuing to support the organisation's response to the coronavirus crisis including supporting wellbeing, work planning / delivery and extensive work around furlough;
- Involvement in weekly Leadership Team meetings, fortnightly managers' and fortnightly all staff Town Hall meetings;
- Ongoing meetings with key contacts within the College including John Neilson, Nick Roalfe, Jane Neary, Shola Alabi and Juan Villamil;
- Attending and preparing for F&R Committee on 17 June;
- Meetings and regular calls with the President, Chair of the Board, Chair of PARC and Chair of F&R;
- Working with the Outsourced FD to establish a more detailed picture about strengths and weaknesses within the finance function;
- Initial induction meetings with the incoming Managing Director;
- One to ones with senior managers and Administration Support Manager;
- Health and Safety Policy and Plan completed and agreed by the Health and Safety Committee;
- Budgeting preparation and planning with the Outsourced FD and Chair of F&R;
- Preparation of proposals for staffing change, to be discussed elsewhere on the agenda.

## 3. Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The Students' Union has accessed the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) since it was first introduced at the very beginning of lockdown. We initially opted to place 12 colleagues within Commercial Services on furlough from 12<sup>th</sup> March and these were followed by an additional 6 staff from 1<sup>st</sup> May. The College were initially reluctant to allow us to place these staff on furlough as they believed it could be argued they were publically funded through the Block Grant. After a number of discussions we were able to present a clear case and clarify that they were funded through commercial revenue and therefore the College changed their position.

We have also utilised the furlough scheme for our student casual staff. Again this involved some negotiation with College and agreement to compromise that has been noted at PARC. There have continued to be challenges in ensuring that our student staff receive the pay that reflects our agreed approach

Significantly, the government released updated guidance on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May that set out the rules of the scheme until its closure at end of October. [Here's a summary](#) of the key parts of the announcement for Board members that are not familiar with the rules.

This announcement triggered three things that impacted our position on furlough:

- The updated guidance brought forward the prospect of being able to access part-time furlough from 1st July i.e. employees being able to work 2-days per week and reclaiming 80% of wages from the CJRS. This was very appealing because it could make a big financial saving and because there were a number of staff with important work but also significantly reduced workloads to whom the scheme could be applied.

- The College appeared to relax their position and became willing to allow us to furlough more staff. This was not necessarily the case before the update on 29<sup>th</sup> May.
- Our April accounts were released and we continued to make progress with our financial scenario planning – including that our worst case scenario could result in a £1.3m deficit budget for 2020-21. As the challenge that faced us became clearer, it became more of an imperative to access the scheme and make savings to the greatest extent possible.

In order to be able to access furlough beyond the end of June (including accessing part-time furlough), staff had to have been furloughed for at least 3-weeks prior to the end of June so the deadline for furloughing new people was Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June.

On this basis the Leadership Team took the decision that the responsible course of action was to furlough as many staff as possible and to cut back to the bare bone in terms of work and only focusing on absolute essentials. It also meant that most of our project work and planning was paused / delayed by at least 3-weeks.

Therefore, as of 10<sup>th</sup> June, 38 staff members with the Students' Union were placed on furlough and one Officer Trustee. 12 staff continued to work in business critical roles (i.e. Systems, Finance, Advice), or because they were ineligible for furlough.

8 colleagues returned to work on 1<sup>st</sup> July, all on a part-time basis and a further 5 are likely to return by early August. We anticipate that the remaining 26 colleagues will likely remain on the furlough scheme until it finishes at the end of October. By the conclusion of the scheme it is likely that it will have saved the Union between £250-300k in salaried staff wages.

I have raised this point for three reasons:

- The significance of both the financial savings and impact on work / outputs;
- The substantial amount of my time required to negotiate our position with College, make decisions and implement the process;
- The knock-on impact on projects that were agreed with the Board as part of the Interim Plan.





#### 4. Interim Projects

The below objectives were agreed as part of the Interim Plan. They were due for completion by end of July 2020. Given the context described above this will not now be possible for some of these projects, although many of them will restart (with a 3 week delay) following the return of some colleagues from furlough. The following gives an at-a-glance summary of progress with a RAG rating.

<b>Strategy and Alignment</b>	<b>NOTES</b>	
1) Begin to develop and assemble robust and comprehensive evidence-base that will underpin the Union's next strategic plan – plans will be in place but any primary research will need to be undertaken in October / November 2020.	This project was being led by the Head of Comms and Systems who had an extended period of absence and is now furloughed. It is proposed that this project integrates with the work now being proposed by the incoming MD on 'Transforming ICU'.	
2) Have in place an effective one year Union Plan that takes the Union through until August 2021. This plan will have a clear and compelling narrative that staff can connect with.	Completed and submitted. This has been reviewed in light of Covid-19 with revised KPIs agreed.	
3) Ensure robust department plans that identify clear success measures and work priorities.	Draft plans complete although will need further work to realign with our October-readiness work.	

<b><u>Leadership and Accountability</u></b>		
4) Support the recruitment of a new Managing Director that is capable of driving change and leading ICU in the future.	Completed.	
5) Prepare a detailed and robust induction programme for a new permanent Managing Director.	Completed and an extensive phased induction is now underway.	
6) Build a senior staff team that have clear responsibilities and accountabilities aligned to their strengths and the needs of the organisation.	Reorganisation completed and SMG given realigned portfolios for 9-months. This will now be impacted by reorganisation proposals discussed elsewhere on the agenda.	
7) Provide coaching and management development for senior staff across the organisation to enable them to thrive in their roles and manage colleagues effectively and consistently	All SMG supported to undertake 'Lead Like Mary' remote leadership programme, regular 1-2-1s and coaching with Interim MD and development plans in place.	
8) Establish clear expectations around performance and behaviour across the Leadership Team and empower the team to hold each other to account against these standards	Expectations exercise undertaken and written up.	
9) Have effective performance management systems and objectives across the organisation (within departments and individual roles). Every team and colleague will have individual objectives, KPIs and development plans	Work undertaken by Admin Support Manager to review framework and agreed at PARC. Much clearer process for follow up and accountability. Reviews will still happen for colleagues at work but will not be able to happen for those furloughed.	
10) Introduce a new decision-making framework that brings clarity over decision-making roles, authority and expectations – this will likely include a new Schedule of Delegation and some tools and disciplines to improve decision-making	Project not yet initiated and is unlikely to be complete by the end of July 2020. Some tools can still be provided i.e. new schedule of delegation.	
<b><u>Culture</u></b>		
11) Improve collaboration across the organisation by reviewing our planning and project methodology and ensuring opportunities for cross-team working.	New methodology introduced and agreed by Leadership Team.	
12) Begin work around process-mapping that enables us to simplify processes where possible and ensure they are helping to make it easier, rather than harder, for people to do great work.	Project initiated and is being led by our Systems Manager. Work will now be completed by end of August 2020.	
13) Refine and tweak our internal communications structures to ensure clarity of purpose and, where possible, reduce the number of meetings giving people greater capacity for delivery.	Adapted to work under remote working and appeared to be working well (managers meetings, Town Hall and Leadership Weekly). We still have regular check-in and all staff meetings during lockdown.	
14) Deliver a project to reconnect ICU with the students' union sector and ensure we effectively benchmark, learn and are in touch with latest trends, good practice and opportunities.	Project initiated and is being led by the Student Opportunities and Development Manager. It is anticipated work will be completed, and outcomes delivered by mid- to late-August.	
<b><u>Finance and Risk</u></b>		
15) Implement a financial recovery plan that improves 2019-20 in-year performance and places the Union on a more stable footing for future years.	Completed, albeit year-end position has now shifted due to Covid-19 closure.	

<b>16)</b> Deliver a successful block grant submission within agreed timescales based on improved analysis about our position.	Bid submitted – we are yet to have formal confirmation of our funding for the year ahead.	
<b>17)</b> Introduce greater clarity about our financial modelling and reporting.	New modelling agreed by Board and will be incorporated into budgeting and future planning.	
<b>18)</b> Review financial systems and processes to ensure they are fit for purpose and efficient.	To be led by Outsourced FD. Initially diagnostic work is taking longer than expected due to challenging context but we are still making solid progress overall.	
<b>19)</b> Reduce total salary / fixed staffing costs to c.65-70% of block grant.	Achieved within restructure, although this work has been superceded by separate paper around staffing proposals.	
<b>20)</b> Assess our capacity and resourcing within the finance function to ensure the right roles focusing on the right work.	To be led by Outsourced FD.	
<b>21)</b> Implement a single Health and Safety plan that outlines all key H&S risks / activities and gives a clear overview of what, who and when	Completed. Health and Safety Committee have agreed plan and College representatives are pleased with progress.	
<b>22)</b> Review and agree an updated Health and Safety policy	Completed. Health and Safety Committee have agreed plan and College representatives are pleased with progress.	
<b>23)</b> Ensure clear accountability at senior staff level for all areas of compliance and risk	Accountability for Health and Safety rests clearly with Head of Commercial and Facilities – further work to consider other compliance related areas.	
<b>24)</b> Seek to codify our relationship and agreements with the College in key partnership areas (i.e. facilities, staffing, commercial etc)	Project initiated and is being led by our Systems Manager. Work will now be completed by end of August 2020. We have made significant progress in our work on an SLA with College Estates.	
<b>25)</b> Implement new commercial business plans for each outlet that will grow revenue and profit, reduce costs and identify a clear strategy (i.e. growth, partnership, subsidy, closure etc)	Work not completed and now outdated given our current context.	
<b>Governance</b>		
<b>26)</b> Introduce improved governance support / administration standards and ensure that papers are circulated a clear week in advance of meetings	The new Governance Officer is settling in well and delivering excellent work. Standards within F&R, PARC and Board have improved to an extent but further work to do to embed this i.e. timely minutes etc.	
<b>27)</b> To ensure that Board members are inducted, developed and have the required tools and information to effectively fulfil their duties and responsibilities as Board members	Project underway and a good overall plan in place although further work required to complete planning and ensure a quality experience for incoming officers and Board members..	

-  = Completed or due for imminent completion;
-  = Not yet progressed but still due for completion on time;
-  = Some delays to progress but will still be completed within interim plan timeframe;
-  = Major delays and/or objective at risk of non-completion;

## 5. People and Culture

Overall, staff have responded maturely and positively around our move to furlough the majority of the workforce. There has, understandably, been some concern about job security and questions around this have increased over the last 2- to 3-weeks. We have reassured where we can whilst also being careful not to make promises we cannot keep. I announced at a Town Hall meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> June that we were potentially looking at a £1.3m deficit and that we would be considering a range of ways to try and mitigate those losses. It is my hope that it will not come as a major surprise to staff when we announce that some staffing changes are required. These proposals are outlined in a separate paper to the Board.

## 6. Conclusion and Summary

The pace of change and level of challenge has continued to be relentless over the past seven weeks. Managing the process of furloughing staff and drafting proposals around organisational change have been all-consuming alongside ensuring that our work in preparing for the new academic year is on track.

The coming months continue to present enormous risk and challenge for the Students' Union, whilst at the same time presenting significant opportunity. Like many organisations we are starting to explore what our new normal should be and build up a full understanding of our learning and development opportunities from this crisis. The coming months will be hard for senior managers, officers and staff, but I still remain confident that there is a bright future for the Union. There are talented staff, outstanding student officers and a genuine opportunity to reinvent our services in a way that is innovative and in line with the needs of students.

**The Board are invited to ask any questions, provide feedback and approve this report.**