

Initiation of a Democratic Structures Review

Proposer: Dr Lloyd T James (President)

Seconder: Michaela Flegrova (Council Chair)

Union Notes

1. The Union's democratic structures (in particular Union Council) have not been meaningfully reviewed in a number of years.
2. The last attempt at review was in 2017/18, and fell through due to strong opposition from Council against quite radical reform of Council (implementation of a more 'direct' form of democracy).
3. A review of these democratic structures to ensure they are fit for purpose was included as one of the President's objectives for this year.
4. ICU Advice and Representation Manager Cat Turhan has developed a project plan for this review in consultation with the President, attached as an Appendix.

Union Believes

1. The effectiveness of the Union's democratic structures is critical to ensuring that we operate as a democratic organisation.
2. It is appropriate that these structures be periodically reviewed to ensure they continue to be operating effectively.
3. It is crucial that any such review has strong buy-in from the members of Council, and as such any recommendations should be developed by a working group of Council.

Union Resolves

1. To approve a Democratic Structures Review to go ahead for this academic year, as outlined in the attached project plan.
2. To create a working group of Council tasked with overseeing this review and developing recommendations, open to any interested Council members.

**Imperial College Union
Project initiation document
Democratic Structures review**

Purpose: To provide a review of the structures which currently support Imperial College Union to fulfil its purpose as a democratic organisation.

1. Introduction

Imperial College Union (ICU) is looking to review its democratic structures to fulfil its value of being a democratic organisation, and to ensure we have a ‘strong democracy’ to support us to empower student communities.¹

The review will particularly look at the structure of Council, including subcommittees.

2. Key Questions

- How can ICU Council better represent its members?
- How can ICU Council facilitate better PG engagement (linked to the PG review)?
- Are there additional functions around or outside of Council which could facilitate a more inclusive democracy?
- Is the size of Council appropriate for effective decision making?

3. What is in scope of this review?

The following things are in scope/not in scope of this review:

| In scope | Out of scope |
|--|--|
| The composition of Council (including increasing/decreasing representation for certain groups) | Elections, and how elections are ran |
| The composition and structure of Council subcommittees | The composition of the full-time positions (e.g. the Officer Trustees, ICSMSU President, Felix Editor) |
| The introduction of additional processes to facilitate democracy (e.g. referenda) | Changes to the nature of volunteer roles, outside of their Council involvement |

4. Timeline of activity

This table documents the intended approach to this review.

| Activity | Lead | Date |
|---|---|---------------|
| Establish a working group | President, Chair of Council | November 2021 |
| Initial scoping of exercise with working group | DSRWG | December 2021 |
| Survey Council members | President, Chair of Council (with support from ICU staff) | January 2022 |
| Interview Council members and other stakeholders | President (with support from ICU staff) | February 2022 |
| Develop a DSR ‘green paper’ outlining potential changes | DSRWG | March 2022 |

¹ Imperial College Union, *Going Back to Basics – our strategic plan* (2021)

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Further consultation with focus groups of Council members | President | April 2022 |
| Development of DSR 'white paper' outlining proposed changes | DSRWG | May 2022 |
| Discussion and approval at Council | President, Chair of Council | June 2022 |
| Elect any new reps | ICU | October 2022 |

5. Working group

It is suggested that an official working group of Council is formed to steer the review. If you are interested in being part of this group, please contact Lloyd at union.president@imperial.ac.uk.

6. Next steps

If the review is agreed upon, ICU will commence this review as soon as possible. If you have further questions, please contact Lloyd at union.president@imperial.ac.uk.