

2 Methods

2.1 Research

2.1.1 Stakeholder Engagement

A research phase consisting of feedback from key stakeholders was conducted. Each key stakeholder was engaged thorough a mixture of surveys, in-person focus-groups and interviews.

The key stakeholders and their engagement methods were:

Stakeholder	Engagement Method
Clubs, Societies & Projects Board	Focus-groups (and some interviews)
DPCS & DPFS	Interviews and focus-group
Student Activities Team	
Imperial College Finance	Interview
ICU Finance & Systems	Interview

The stakeholder engagement focus-groups and surveys aimed to identify:

- Key issues and opportunities with the current process
- Identification of key measures for a “good budgeting process”
- Sharing of good practice.

The interviews focused on specific insight and expertise relevant to the persons being interviewed.

2.1.2 Sector Analysis

In addition to the stakeholder engagement, a literature review of key students’ unions in the sector, and some similar bodies in the charity and higher education sectors, was conducted. This review aimed to summarise key policies and procedures, identify differences in budgeting processes and evaluate different processes based upon the key measures identified in the stakeholder engagement.

The literature review was then followed by an evaluation of key principles under each key measure. This evaluation informed the final options appraisal.

2.2 Development

After the research phase, the development phase consisted of considering all research and sector analysis, combining it into a list of possible options and conducting an options appraisal to identify the chosen way forward.

3 Research

3.1 Current process

The current process is governed by the CSP Annual Budgeting Policy, which outlines the principles for allocating grant and making a budget, and the Student Group Funding Policy, which details more general principles to ensure that we comply with legislation, regulation and policy.

3.2 Feedback on current process

Table 1 - CSPB feedback on current process (thematised)

Theme	Issue
Transparency	Need for clearer communication on scaling
	Not transparent for CSP leaders
	Many committees don't know how much they can apply for or think they can't go over a cap without consequences
	Policy not applied evenly, and thoughts change mid-meeting
	Transparency of the CSPB meetings
	Transparency in scaling is not good
	Keeps changing every year - inconsistent and forces people to re-learn processes
Process	No clear criteria for contested allocations
	Clarity over policy on hospitality/support (e.g., VegSoc, TeaSoc)
	CSPB approval needs review - MG1/2 "ping-pong"
	Burden of proof should be on CSP not MGs
	Proof of need - needs to be more robust
	Allocate per member (i.e., bigger CSPs get more money according to membership)
	Need to consider all funding sources available to groups - balance
	CSPs receive different allocations each year despite the same budget
	Reliance on outgoing committee
	Spending up to end of year but budgeting is done in Jan
	Very early on with little flexibility to change later
	People don't understand what they're reviewing
	No consistency in decisions year on year
	MG2 review ineffective
Appeals	Appeals process not fit for purpose
	Inadequate appeals process
Scaling	Reduction only based on valid reason - avoid scaling
	Scaling leads to budgets being written with scaling in mind/taken into account
Time/Resources	Too labour heavy on volunteers compounded by not everyone pulling their weight
	Takes too long

The feedback reviewed by CSPB

3.3 Key metrics

Based upon the feedback provided by CSPB and the Student Activities Team, the following five key metrics have been identified. Each have been broken down into their key elements.

Compliance

- Charity law.
- Financial regulations.
- Consider the Equalities Act / preventing discrimination.
- Insurance requirements.
- Imperial policies and procedures
- Sustainability.
- Conflicts of interest.

Equity

- Identical activity should lead to identical grant allocated per member.
- Equal opportunities to apply.
- Minimise unconscious bias / unbiased assessment of grant applications.
- Promote inclusivity.
- Promote integrity.
- Consider the Equalities Act / preventing discrimination.
- Equity of support provided to CSP committees.
- Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

Transparency

- Transparency of the assessment process and policy.
- Public reporting of outcomes.
- Effective communication to CSP committees.

Efficiency

- Minimising student and staff time required.
- Minimising resource required.
- Maximising grant utilisation.
- Maximising grant efficacy.
- Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

Financial accuracy

- Evaluating how effectively budgets match actual yearly spends.
- Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

3.4 Sector Analysis

Throughout the wider SU sector, the processes used to budget for societies and allocate grant are vastly different.

Key SUs in the sector were identified and the table below details their processes alongside an evaluation of their process against our five key criteria.

4 Key Considerations

Through the Sector Analysis Phase, a number of key streams for consideration of our own policy and procedure have been identified, as well as some further options.

Key streams:

- Level of staff-student control
- Timeframes (spring vs summer)
- Level of specificity in grant allocations (quantitative vs qualitative principles)

Further considerations:

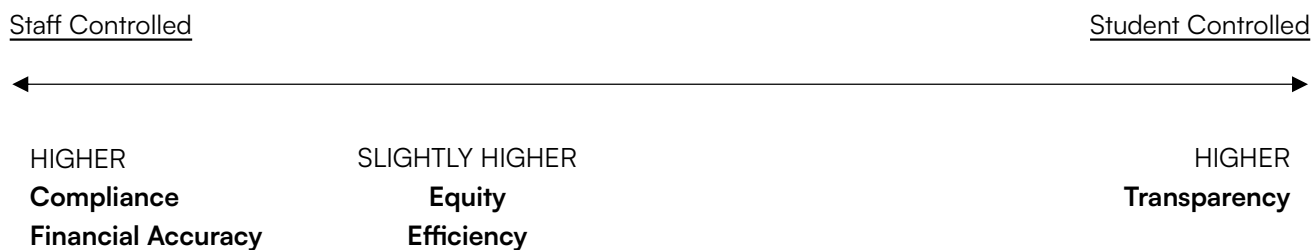
- Scope of grant eligibility

4.1 Level of staff-student control

Some SUs, such as RHUL SU and UCLSU, have a high level of staff-control in their budgeting procedures (regardless of the procedures themselves). Other SUs, namely ICU, delegate almost all decision making to students, with only staff oversight until the appeals and board approvals stages. Most SUs exist somewhere between both models.

Higher staff control is linked to increased **compliance** and **financial accuracy**, whereas higher student control is often linked to increased **transparency**.

With regard to **equity**, those policies with a balance between student and staff input are most equitable, as student input can be more specific and detailed than staff input due to their proximity with CSPs, but staff input can ensure that an overview of all allocations is kept.



From the point of view of both staff and students, the process becomes “more **efficient**” when the other party leads the process, as the perceived amount of time taken is lower. On the whole, however, there are usually increases to **efficiency** with higher staff control, but to the detriment of **transparency**.

ACTION: Consider in options appraisal.

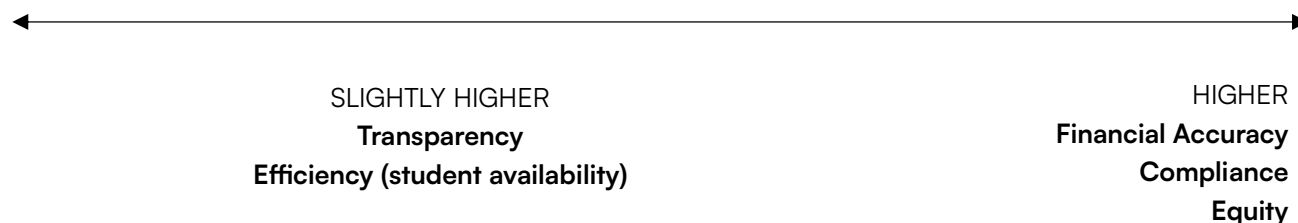
4.2 Timeframes

A number of SUs, such as UCLSU, carry out their entire yearly-budgeting procedure over the summer break. This allows budgets to be highly **financially accurate** and improves the **equity** of the process due to the availability of end of year accounts.

ICU, on the other hand, conducts its budgeting process from January to March (with staff elements until July) of the academic year prior to the year being budgeted for. This is before staff department budgets are completed. Historically, this is done to improve **transparency** and accountability due to students having low availability over the summer term and the unfairness of a summer holiday budgeting period involving a high number of students. *Thus, this is inherently linked to the level of staff-student control.*

Earlier (Term 2)

Later (Summer Break)



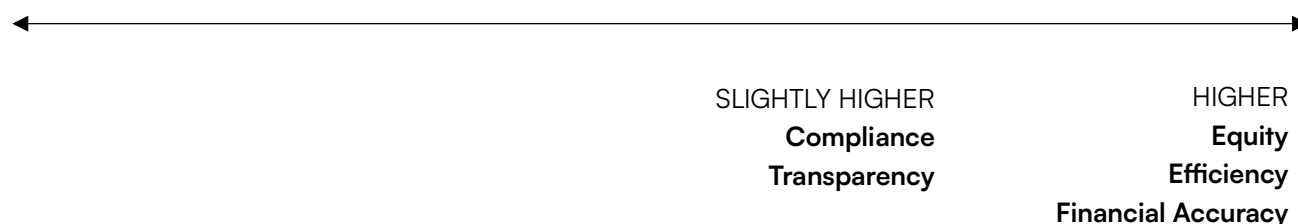
ACTION: Consider in options appraisal.

4.3 Levels of specificity in grant allocations

ICU operates an almost entirely qualitative grant allocation process, with the only quantitative principles being focused on total allocations, minimum memberships or total reserves, with no specific principles for core grant allocation. As such, CSPB will agree on more detailed principles during their resolution meetings in attempt to ensure that grant allocations are **equitable** between CSPs. Unfortunately, due to the sheer number of budgets, and the fact that MG1 and MG2 conduct allocations before these principles are agreed, many grant allocations are not **equitable** after this process. Highly qualitative principles (i.e. not specific) lead to lower **equitability**, **efficiency** and **financial accuracy**. They are, however, often easier to understand and thus more **transparent**, and also provide the opportunity for exceptional cases to be argued by CSPs and CSPB.

Low Specificity (qualitative)

High Specificity (quantitative)



ACTION: Consider in options appraisal.

4.4 Scope of grant eligibility

UCLSU and LUSU, amongst others, take a radical approach with regard to which societies are eligible for regular yearly grant. Only sports clubs and some arts societies receive a pre-determined (often fully by staff) amount to subsidise their activities. All other societies are expected to be self-sufficient, but can apply for funding opportunities throughout the year for new/developing activity (akin to ICU's Activities Development Fund). The SUs which follow this procedure justify it by the fact that these societies have regular core activity which is very expensive and members of these groups still pay more than other societies despite subsidies. Having a different process for different types of student groups improves **transparency** as it is clearer who is eligible for what and improves **efficiency** by reducing the workload for all staff and students. However, in our opinion, it reduces **equity**, as it does not present an equal opportunity for all, and reduces **compliance** with the Education Act.

On the other hand, ICU provides the opportunity for every CSP to receive a regular yearly grant allocation regardless of the nature of their activity. The only requirement is to have a minimum membership fee and membership target, which also determines their maximum grant allocation.

There is a requirement under the Education Act 1994 that:

The procedure for allocating resources to groups or clubs should be fair and should be set down in writing and freely accessible to all students.

This is a requirement of Imperial College Council, but we share responsibility through our Code of Practice.

It could be argued that not allowing all CSPs to access annual grant, like at UCLSU, conflicts with this requirement, but it could equally be argued that their policy is a fair allocation of resources.

ACTION: Disregard — ICU's values and our interpretation of our legal requirement leads us to believe that we should provide the opportunity for all CSPs to receive regular annual grant (subject to policy).

5 Initial Options

These initial options consider the key streams highlighted above. Each option is a unique combination of one or more of the key streams of work. The options **do not** aim to quantify the extent to which the change would be made, just to highlight the change itself. The development phase will consider the extent to which the change would be made.

An options appraisal has been carried out on the proposed options. Each proposal has been evaluated against the key metrics identified. They are:

- Compliance
- Equity
- Transparency
- Efficiency
- Financial accuracy