

Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 23 July 2025

Activities-related Designated Funds for 2025/26

- Author(s): Christian Cooper (Deputy President (Clubs & Societies))
- Purpose(s): To outline a case for designating funding for projects within the Activities Team and for the Activities Development Fund for the 2025/26 academic year.
- Decision(s): To **approve**.

1. Context

This paper sets out the balance of unused CSP grant and ADF allocations to date, and a case for funding of the Activities Development Fund (ADF) and Activities Team projects for the 2025/26 academic year.

2. ADF Context

Student groups are allocated an annual grant for the following financial year as part of the annual budget. Any underspends have historically been allocated to the ADF, which is a “Designated Fund” (unrestricted, with no legal restriction on usage but earmarked at trustees’ discretion). The intended purpose of the fund has been to support new student group activities, and unexpected success, and has also historically been used for new equipment because of loss or damages.

Designated funds form part of “Unrestricted Funds”, and can be reversed or amended at trustees’ discretion, with balances presented separately in the statutory year-end accounts. Any designation requires Trustee approval.

Funding allocations from ADF are the responsibility of the Clubs, Societies & Projects Board (CSPB), with oversight from the DPCS and Activities Manager.

This academic year, ADF allocations by CSPB have been lower than previous years. We believe this is due to:

- An increased vigilance by the CSPB-subcommittee responsible for ADF allocations, resulting in fewer successful applications, but a more effective use of funds.
- Student groups requiring funding for new initiatives which currently do not fall under the remit of ADF, such as sustainability and community building.

Principles for the ADF were previously established (June 2022 Finance, Audit & Risk Committee) as follows:

- ADF is an important source of funding for CSPs.
- All increases to the ADF will be subject to explicit approval of Trustees but will in principle be increased by the total net underspend of CSP grants each year.
- ADF should be utilised in line with the ADF Policy owned by CSPB, unless otherwise determined by Trustees.
- ADF should be used as a risk management tool to fund unexpected group losses before the Union’s general reserve is accessed.

- The Clubs and Societies Project Board (CSPB), which has delegated responsibility for allocation of these funds, should aim to maintain a minimum balance of ADF of £30k to fund shocks and group losses.
- To ensure that the ADF does not restrict too significant an amount of Union funds, it will be capped at £100k.

3. Current ADF & Grant Balances

The current balance of ADF is c.£137k, which is above the £100k cap noted above. Table 1 presents proposals for ADF designation for 2025/26.

Option 1 maintains the status quo of allocating £70k to ADF and £30k to contingency. Option 2 increases the ADF allocation to £90k and maintains the £30k contingency.

CSP spending is still live, therefore we expect the “CSP 2024/25 grant underspend” to decrease until mid-July. Any changes in underspend will be reflected in a reduction of funds returned to ICU general funds. Should a reduction in mean that less than £100k is available, we will seek to allocate all available funds to ADF/contingency, not ICU general funds.

Table 1 - Current ADF balance and proposed breakdown

	<u>Proposal for 2025/26</u>
Opening Balance	100,000.00
Balance for contingency/future years	(30,000.00)
ADF allocations in year	(21,235.65)
Proposed supplement to 2025/26 CSP annual grant	(9,141.53)
Proposed outdoor activity project	(3,000.00)
CSP 2024/25 grant underspend ¹	73,335.82
Closing balance	109,958.64
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Returned to ICU general funds/SIF ²	9,958.64
Balance to designate	100,000.00
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Opening Balance (proposal)	100,000.00
Balance for contingency/future years	(30,000.00)
Available funds for ADF 25/26	70,000.00

¹ Any grant allocated for the current academic year, which remains unspent at the end of the academic year.

² Any funds over the £100k cap are normally returned to ICU general funds or the Strategic Investment Fund.

4. Proposed supplement to 2025/26 CSP annual grant

It is proposed that, due to the higher than ever annual grant requests during CSP annual budgeting, £9,141.53 is allocated towards the CSP grant budget for 2025/26. FAR recommends this proposal to the Board.

5. Proposed outdoor activity project

This to cover a project running with other Russell Group SUs convened by Bristol SU Howden (our insurers) and Organised Fun (an SU activities sector consultancy) to create a kitemark, minimum standards, and cohesive guidance around good practice for outdoor activities. The project aims to support outdoor and recreational groups in facilitating their events safely and with the best possible support, without being overly limiting.

This project has been developed and is supported by the Activities Managers and Director of Membership Services. It is the view of the paper author that this is a highly effective use of funds which will enable ICU to continue to deliver un-paralleled access to exploration/outdoor activities in a safe and effective manner.

6. Expansion of ADF

ADF spending this academic year is significantly lower than in previous years. This is likely due to:

- An increased vigilance by the CSPB-subcommittee responsible for ADF allocations, resulting in fewer successful applications, but a more effective use of funds.
- Student groups requiring funding for new initiatives which currently do not fall under the remit of ADF, such as sustainability and community building.

Whilst it is positive that ADF funds are being used more effectively, we are still seeing a high demand for funding in general, as has been made clear, during annual budgeting where a record-high figure of £1.1M was requested. It is within the remit of CSPB to determine the funding principles for ADF and it is recommended that CSPB conduct a review of the funding principles with the Activities Team to ensure that the fund can be best utilised in future years.

7. Recommendation

Finance, Audit & Risk Committee, in their June 2025 meeting, recommended the following:

The Board is asked **to provisionally³ approve** the designation of £70,000.00 for ADF and the carrying-over of £30,000.00 for contingency.

The Board is asked **to approve** the designation of £3,000.

The Board is asked **to approve** the designation of £9,141.53 to supplement the CSP annual grant.

³ Subject to determination of the final CSP underspend figure for the current academic year.