Imperial College Union
Governance & Membership Sub-Committee

DRAFT Minutes / Hybrid meeting of 4 September 2024 in Beit Building & on MS Teams

1. Introductions & Attendance

Trustees Present

Dr Phil Power in the Chair	(PP)	Alumni Trustee (Sub-Committee Chair)
Prof Dot Griffiths	(DG)	External Trustee
Jane Coulson	(JC)	External Trustee
Camille Boutrolle	(CB)	Officer Trustee (Union President)
Nico Henry	(NH)	Officer Trustee (Deputy President (Welfare))
Monica Jin Yang	(MJY)	Student Trustee
Yi Yang	(YY)	Student Trustee
Anthea MacIntosh-LaRocque	(AML)	Union Council Chair

Staff In Attendance

Tom Newman	(TN)	Managing Director
Cat Turhan	(CT)	Director of Membership Services
Clem Jones	(CJ)	Governance & Executive Manager
Helena Schofield	(HS)	Representation Manager – from Item 9

Apologies

Emina Hogas	(EH)	Officer Trustee (Deputy President (Education))

PP **welcomed** everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

6 September 2023

Approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

25 July 2024

Approved as an accurate record of proceedings subject to correction of 'JG' typo to 'JC'.

3. Matters Arising

Noted the Action Tracker.

i. It was noted that the action regarding whether reimbursable resource might be available for Working Class Officer candidates had been considered - in the past, only campaign spending for the Officer Trustee and Constituent Union President positions has been reimbursed by the Union; the Elections Team will consider as part of the planning for this year's Leadership Elections whether the Union might be able to reimburse campaign spend for further positions e.g. LCOs.

ii. DG asked how the Union is increasing the training for students to encourage them to use disciplinary procedures. CJ noted that Student Leadership Training is planned for the 26 and 27 September, one session of which is on safeguarding in its broadest sense which will also branch out into wellbeing, concerns about member conduct and how to raise those allegations. JC asked whether information

about where to go if you have an issue is available on the website. CJ noted that there is a webpage about complaints and feedback; it is slightly more geared towards how to raise a complaint about Union services at the moment and suggested that how to raise concerns about member conduct needs to be made clearer. CJ to take forward and confirm.

There were no more questions on the action tracker. PP thanked CJ for putting it together.

4. Declarations of Any Conflicts of Interest

Noted that that some Officer Trustees and Student Trustees on the Committee have a potential/real Conflict of Interest relating to Items 11 and 12, if they are eligible/intending to run in Union elections this academic year.

Noted that one of the complaints in the Complaints & Disciplinaries summary under Item 6 had complained about CB.

5. Identification of Items of Confidential Business

The minutes of the 25 July 2024 meeting would remain confidential to the Committee.

6. Complaints & Disciplinaries Update

CJ presented paper GM/24-25/01.

Role Appointments

i. PP queried if any of the proposed appointments were different from previous years. CJ noted that the only proposed change is for Complaints Officer role to be linked to a role postholder rather than a named individual.

*The Committee **approved** the proposed appointments to roles required in the Statutory Complaints and Members' Discipline Procedures.*

Summary of 2023-24 Cases

Complaints

i. CT suggested a longitudinal tracker of trends in future could provide insight to use with Union teams in in order to improve Union services. JC commended this idea. AML also suggested it could be useful to present graphs with the average time it takes to resolve a complaint, in order to highlight any outliers. CB asked if the Union guarantees a complaint response time. CJ noted that Byelaw G stipulates certain response times depending on the level of the complaint. TN suggested that service standards could be created for complaints and response times could be recorded and reported back to the Committee along with complaint theme trends. CB noted that the Union is well within the sector standard for timelines but welcomed improved tracking for continuous improvement. PP summarised that the Union could take these suggestions on board for the future.
ii. PP asked if the Union's request for additional resource within the Activities Team had been resolved. TN noted that the funding had been secured but the proposed grading of new roles is currently being reviewed by College HR, after which the Union will be able to go out to recruit for the new roles.

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Disciplinaries

iii. DG suggested that, similar to complaints, it might be helpful to report on timelines TN suggested that trends would also be helpful, noting that a lot of the cases are within the context of clubs and societies. CT also noted she is leading a project regarding setting mutual expectations that students and Union staff can have of each other regarding behaviour, which would include inclusivity training for club and society leaders as part of Student Leadership Training; acknowledging the trend regarding cases emerging in the context of student groups, CT stated she hoped the mitigating work of the project would have an impact.

iv. PP also suggested that, where a case is Level 3 (Referral to College), it would be helpful to report on how long those cases are taking to administer.

*The Committee **noted** the summary of cases.*

7. Committee Effectiveness Review

CJ noted that a Board Effectiveness Review was undertaken in 2022, but it did not consider the effectiveness of the Board's subcommittees in detail. CJ noted that Finance, Audit & Risk Sub-Committee undertook an effectiveness review earlier in 2024 and he had therefore briefly corresponded with PP as to whether there should be a Governance & Membership Sub-Committee effectiveness review as well. CJ also noted that effectiveness reviews will be an agenda item at the full Board meeting in two weeks' time but wished to invite the views of the committee first. TN noted for context that the approach taken for the Finance, Audit & Risk effectiveness review was threefold:

i. Committee member survey
ii. Offer of 15/30 minute interviews with committee members
iii. Desktop analysis against terms of reference

JC commented that the meeting pattern (one standing meeting annually and then as needed throughout the year) seems to be efficient at getting to the heart of what needs to be done and then calling any further meetings to address additional matters as and when they arise. DG suggested that, as the committee does not meet as often as Finance, Audit & Risk, a solely paper-based approach for reviewing Governance & Membership may be more appropriate. DG also noted that a matter of principle, a formal review of some sort would be good practice.

TN outlined that the next steps would involve drafting the review approach, sharing it with the committee Chair for feedback, and proceeding with the review if agreed.

*The Committee duly **considered** the matter.*

8. Democracy & Corporate Structure Review Update

CJ provided a verbal update on the ongoing democracy and corporate structure review project, detailing the engagement of consultants, the dual focus on democratic engagement and legal structure of the organisation, and the anticipated timeline for student consultation and board decisions:

- Consultant Engagement and Project Streams: Clem reported that consultants from Counterculture LLP and Bates Wells have been engaged to lead the democracy and corporate structure streams respectively, with operational management by CJ and HS.
- Student Consultation Plans: For the democracy review, the autumn term will focus on student consultation, including interviews and focus groups with student leaders and the wider student body, facilitated by the consultants.

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- Due Diligence and Legal Review: On the corporate structure side, the team is completing a detailed due diligence questionnaire covering policies, assets, and liabilities, with some delays due to awaiting college responses.
- Timeline and Reporting: Clem stated that recommendations on corporate structure are expected for the November board meeting, with democracy review findings to be presented to Council in November and December, allowing for further consultation and potential adjustments.

*The committee **noted** the update.*

9. Bye-Law J (Major Elections) Review

CJ presented paper GM/24-25/02, noting that the proposed bye-law change seeks to avoid a situation where an election result might have to be overturned *after results are announced* due to a candidate complaining about the conduct of the Returning Officer

i. DG suggested that the improvements sought are, in principle, a very good thing to do, as the eventuality of a candidate potentially experiencing being "unelected" would be extremely difficult and a very unfair experience for the individual. DG asked if the proposed change in timescale for candidates to lodge a complaint about the Returning Officer would remove the problem of having to declare candidates "unelected" subsequent to an election result announcement. TN noted that election timetables are usually set so that voting closes on early Thursday afternoon which, under the proposed timescales, would then give candidates until early Friday afternoon to complain about the Returning Officer, ahead of scheduled election results announcements on Friday evening; this timing would enable the Elections Team to know whether they need to refrain from announce the results for a particular position pending consideration of any complaints about the Returning Officer.
ii. AML suggested that the consequences of changing the timescale available for candidates to complain would be worse than the consequence of having the unlikely circumstance that an election result may have to be overturned. AML also suggested that, as the Returning Officer may take time after the complaints deadline to consider whether a complaint against a candidate should be upheld and whether any sanction should be applied, the time available for a [disqualified] candidate to complain about the conduct of the Returning Officer is in effect much less than 24 hours' notice from the point of a [disqualification] sanction being applied. DG noted that nevertheless as soon as a complaint against the conduct of the Returning Officer is received (until 24 hours after the close of voting), this essentially puts a stop on the result for that position being declared pending consideration of the complaint. CB suggested that the 10-day allowance to complain about the conduct of the Returning Officer allows excessive leeway for candidates to make malicious complaints about the Returning Officer.
iii. JC asked for context whether the Union normally receives complaints about the Returning Officer throughout the elections process or if such complaints arise when individuals are unhappy with outcomes. It was noted that the Union does not normally receive complaints about the Returning Officer throughout the process of elections but has received such a complaint when an individual has been unhappy with an outcome.

PP suggested the matter be considered further offline and if relevant to and to bring revised recommendations to a future meeting or the Board. The committee **agreed** to this suggestion.

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10. Election Dates

HS presented paper GM/24-25/02.

i. NH asked if the purdah period affecting any rerunning officers needed to be included in the election timetable. HS suggested that this need not necessarily be detailed in the paper but suggested that the purdah period dates could be set and clearly communicated to affected candidates.
ii. CT noted that there is an inclusivity risk due to Leadership Election dates clashing with Ramadan. CT assured the Committee that she and the Elections Team will work closely with any Muslim students affected by this to ensure they are able to participate in a free and fair way, as the proposed dates for Leadership Elections are the most feasible election timetable that would coincide with term dates. AML asked if this had been discussed with any students observing Ramadan. HS noted it had not, to her knowledge, been discussed, but noted it would be important to discuss adjustments that could be made for students observing Ramadan who wish to stand in the elections.

The Committee agreed to recommend the proposed Election Dates to the Returning Officers of this academic year's elections.

11. Appointment of Returning Officers & Election Rules

HS presented paper GM/24-25/04.

Appointment of Returning Officers

The Committee approved the proposed Returning Officer/Deputy Returning Officer appointments for the 2024-2025 elections as proposed in GM/24-25/04.

Election Rules

i. AML suggested there could be consistency in the use of either the term publicity or campaign materials throughout the rules, as both are currently used at different points. HS agreed that this could be updated so that the wording is consistent.
ii. AML also suggested it could be useful to have a definitions section. HS agreed that a code or table could be helpful but wondered whether it would be part of the candidate pack/and or briefing rather than being part of the rules. CJ noted the rules are the gift of the Returning Officer of each election. DG suggested that the definitions could be a guide section. JC suggested that any definitions list would need to be something that can be updated, as new technology may developed which candidates then may use for their campaigns, and suggested that the candidate pack is probably the best place for any such list.
iii. AML noted that the term College and the term University are both used different points to refer to Imperial. HS suggested College should be updated to University.
iv. AML suggested that academic-related and university-administered should be hyphenated in Rule 6.
v. AML suggested that Rule 12 should say "the English translation being equal or greater in prominence", in order to be clear that it is not the foreign language that needs to be equal or greater in prominence but the English translation.
vi. AML asked who the risk assessment should be submitted to under Rule 14. HS noted risk assessments should be submitted to the Elections Team, though noted that the proposed activity would then need the permission of the University

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Secretary before going ahead, and suggested that this could be made clear in the candidate briefing.

vii. NH noted some students thought they had found a loophole last year by endorsing candidates through meme pages on social media which could be argued to be an acceptable personal endorsement as they are owned by one individual. NM therefore suggested that the Union could be clearer on what is meant by in a personal capacity.

The Committee agreed to recommend (subject to incorporating the revisions above), the proposed Rules for this year's elections to the Returning Officers of those elections.

12. AOB

None.

PP thanked everyone for attending and noted looking forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming Board meeting in two weeks' time.

ENDS.

Actions Log/Tracker

Safeguarding Training Confirmation: Confirm that the safeguarding and well-being session is definitely included in the student leadership training on 26th-27th September. (CJ) DONE.

Website Clarity on Discipline Allegations: Update the complaints and feedback web page to clearly indicate the process for raising concerns about member conduct, not just service complaints. (Webpages have changed but require further updating, CJ to update committee)

Complaints Reporting Improvements: Incorporate tracking of complaint response times and service standards, including whether responses are within required timeframes, into future complaints reports. (CJ)

Complaints and Disciplinary Trends Analysis: Add timelines and trend analysis, including outliers and average resolution times, to future complaints and disciplinary reports. (CJ) DONE

Major Elections Bye-Law: considered further offline. DONE – discussed with the Chair and, having considered the matter, Elections Team decided no longer to propose to make any changes to the Major Elections Byelaw at this time.

Behavioural Expectations Project: Continue work on setting expectations for student and staff behaviour and incorporate inclusivity and appropriate behaviour training into club and society leaders training. (CT) DONE

Committee Effectiveness Review Approach: Draft and share the proposed approach for the committee effectiveness review with PP for feedback before proceeding. (TN/CJ) DONE

Democracy and Corporate Structure Review Update: Provide an update on the progress of the democracy and corporate structure review, including consultation and due diligence, to the board in two weeks' time. (DONE)

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