

Constituent Union and ICU Partnership Agreement

Author(s): Helena Schofield (Representation Manager)
 Anisa Price (RSMU President)
 Daniel Zhuo (CGCU President)
 Jack Swires (RCSU President)
 Sarah Azam (ICSMSU President)

Purpose: To outline how ICU and Constituent Unions will work collaboratively to enhance the student experience at Imperial.

1. Context

ICU's recent Democracy Review identified that undergraduate students tend to feel more represented by their Constituent Union than ICU. Typically, it is believed that Imperial students feel most associated to what they are studying, which could play a part in this, alongside the 'on the ground' visibility and reach of Constituent Unions. Previously, there has been no existence of a working agreement or framework between Constituent Unions and ICU which has led to some operational and reputational challenges.

Additionally, communicating the different representative and community building structures across Imperial, and the relation between each, can be complicated and difficult for students to understand. Therefore, a priority for ICU going forward to improve these challenges is to work more collaboratively with Constituent Unions, and to better complement and support their activity. This partnership agreement will facilitate this process by:

- Setting out joint and individual priorities and objectives to create a shared understanding and expectations
- Outlining expected activities and support available from ICU, aligned to the needs of the CU
- Including commitments to inclusive representation and community development

This will lead to enhanced activity on both sides, as well as assuring efforts to gain wider scale representation.

2. Objectives and scope

The ICU Representation Manager, and CGCU, ICSMSU, RSMU, RCSU Presidents have worked together to determine the scope and objectives of what should be achieved through this partnership agreement:

- i. ICU staff, Imperial staff, Constituent Union committees, alumni associations, and the wider student population agree on shared expectations of the role and impact of Constituent Unions to the student experience.
- ii. Long-term consistency is provided regardless of committee and staff changes, through handovers, regular activity timelines, shared administration access, and key contacts, which are updated annually.
- iii. A shared approach to annual consistent training, support and boundaries is established to support Constituent Unions' contribution to enhancing the student experience through their activity and representation.

- iv. Financial management, support, and responsibilities have a clear delegation between ICU and CUs.

This partnership agreement will work in conjunction with ICU Bye-Law L, and each Constituent Union's standing orders, which set out the governance frameworks to how Constituent Unions operate. This agreement will be reviewed annually. All these documents can be referred to where necessary if either party feel that expectations have not been met. For the current academic year, this agreement will not be applicable to the Dean's Student Advisory Council (DSAC), which was recently established as a Constituent Union, as further work needs to be done to work with DSAC to better understand their needs and operations. The aim is that future agreements will be applicable to all Constituent Unions, including DSAC.

3. Purpose, remits and expectations of ICU and CUs

3.1 Imperial College Union

ICU represents, supports, and advises the student body, and is the main recognised overall representative channel between students and Imperial, and any other external bodies. Its strategic goals are:

- To be an effective influence and advocate for all students
- To support and enhance the wellbeing of students
- To strengthen and help create active and inclusive communities

ICU facilitates the representation and activity of Constituent Unions through supporting operational needs to ensure their outputs are effective, inclusive, impactful, and safe.

3.2 Constituent Unions

Constituent Faculty Unions are the most senior level representative body at a faculty level and drive the political and creative direction of representation and activity through student views, needs and interests. Silwood is currently the only active Constituent Campus Union at Imperial and delivers activity and community building for the students based there. All Constituent Unions will provide a range of outreach activity to enhance the student experience. They also aim to maintain and develop relationship with alumni from their respective CU, with support from ICU as required.

3.2.1 Scope of representation

Constituent Faculty Unions represent all students within their Faculty, including Undergraduates, and Postgraduates (Taught, and Research). Currently, ICU is developing frameworks and support to strengthen the Postgraduate side of Constituent Faculty Union representation, to ensure that they can effectively represent the welfare, education, and social needs of the Postgraduate population.

As outlined in Bye-Law L, Constituent Unions act as the Management Group for relevant clubs and societies, including Departmental Societies. Additionally, the Representation Networks, consisting of Academic and Wellbeing Representatives, feed into Constituent Unions via Academic/Education or Wellbeing/Welfare Chairs, Officers, or Vice-Presidents, who serve on Constituent Union committees, and are otherwise known as Faculty Representatives.

Each Constituent Union has the autonomy to develop differing role descriptions to one another, as long as the responsibilities of principal roles, activity delivery, and, for Constituent Faculty Unions, the basics of representation are covered sufficiently and consistently.

3.3 Shared purpose

Both ICU and Constituent Unions aim to enhance education and the student experience through:

- Promoting the educational interests and welfare of students during their course of study
- Providing social, cultural, and recreational activities and forums for discussion and debate for the personal development of its students.

3.4 Overview of committee roles

All Constituent Unions are usually led by large committees. Their principal committee roles are classed as:

- A President/Chair
- A non-portfolio Deputy President or Secretary
- A Treasurer

At a minimum, Constituent Faculty Union committees should also have:

- An Academic/Education Officer, Chair or Vice-President
- A Wellbeing/Welfare Officer, Chair or Vice-President
- A Clubs/Societies/Activities Officer, Chair or Vice-President
- An established role or mechanism to represent both Research and Taught Postgraduate students

Any other committee positions are dependent on the constituent needs, and up to the discretion of the Constituent Union Presidents to outline through the Standing Orders.

Committee positions are unpaid, with the exception of the ICSMSU President which is funded by the School of Medicine. If faculties express that Constituent Unions should be delivering work outside of their role remits, then it is up to the discretion of the faculties to remunerate this as appropriately agreed between them and the Constituent Union.

3.5 Working with stakeholders

Both ICU and Constituent Unions will work regularly with Imperial, external, and alumni stakeholders. It is recommended that the finalised agreement should be circulated annually to any stakeholders that either of them work with. Constituent Union Presidents also operate as honorary position holders on alumni association committees, so will also interact with them through this capacity.

Predominantly, the relationship between Constituent Unions and Faculties should be a partnership as described in the Imperial Student Partnership Framework. Faculties should ensure Constituent Unions are included in relevant committees and spaces discussing student issues, as well as in the development of any departmental events. Faculties in some cases may also support to provide links with alumni stakeholders.

Constituent Unions may aim to maintain relationships with relevant alumni associations. These relationships must demonstrate clear and direct benefit for current student members. Any collaboration should provide financial and/or developmental value to the Constituent Union in ways that measurably support and enhance the experience of current students within the constituency.

4. Support

ICU and Constituent Unions will work collaboratively to deliver their shared and individual goals. ICU will also provide support to Constituent Union committees, via the principal members, equitable to the support that is provided to other senior volunteers. Constituent Union Presidents or the most appropriate delegate as decided by them, should act as the main conduit with ICU stakeholders throughout the academic year, who are:

- ICU Activities Managers for matters regarding clubs, societies, finances, sponsorship, transport, risk management, and events
- ICU Representation Manager for matters relating to elections, liberation, policy, campaigns, education and welfare representation, and the overarching approach to ICU/CU governance, partnership, support and training
- ICU Events Coordinators for the Clubs and Societies/Events/Activities
- ICU Representation Coordinators for the Academic/Education and Welfare/Wellbeing Officers/Vice-Presidents/Chairs
- Other ICU staff on a project-specific basis as the need arises

Constituent Union Presidents will also still be accountable to and work in collaboration with the ICU President and Deputy Presidents as outlined in Bye-Law L. Constituent Unions should also aim to enhance the operations of ICU by taking part in promoting relevant ICU activity to drive student engagement, maintain regular digital and physical communications with ICU key contacts, and attend the Presidents' Forum when the Union President deems such meetings as required.

Where Constituent Unions run activity that they wish for ICU to promote, this can be done by CUs reaching out to request this via the ICU Representation Manager at least 3-weeks prior to the activity happening, providing that the activity has been approved and signed off, and the ICU social calendar allows.

Faculties should also support and encourage the operations of Constituent Unions. This could include, but is not limited to, financial support for events, navigating Faculty or Department processes, and any joint initiatives to further the educational advancement of students in their Faculty.

4.1 Resources

ICU will develop a shared digital space for key ICU stakeholders, and Constituent Union committee members to access and upload live materials which should be accessible to both parties to improve consistency between new ICU staff and CU committee members.

This is likely to be a space within ICU's main Sharepoint site, with an area per Constituent Union. It will include the following, all of which will be co-developed or regularly co-reviewed by ICU and each Constituent Union President.

- 4.1.1 A copy of relevant documents pertaining to the operation of each Constituent Union, such as Bye-Laws, Standing Orders, and this partnership agreement.
- 4.1.2 A list of useful contacts for each Constituent Union, including ICU staff, Faculty or University contacts, and alumni contacts. This could also include other external contacts such as Venue Managers for Constituent Union-led events, or sponsorship providers.
- 4.1.3 Full role descriptions for all positions on each Constituent Union committee.
- 4.1.4 Annual activity calendars, outlining any activity that is delivered on a cyclical basis, one depicting ICU's activity, and another depicting each Constituent Union's activity.
- 4.1.5 Template and past risk assessments and event information for Constituent Union committees to review and reuse as appropriate.
- 4.1.6 Memorandum of Understanding for Constituent Unions and Alumni Associations.
- 4.1.7 Handover documents for each Constituent Union committee covering all positions.

Additionally, outside of shared resources with ICU, faculties should provide access to mailing lists for CUs, containing emails of all students that they represent.

4.2 Training overview

4.2.1 Mandatory

Each academic year, ICU will organise an in-person training day each June for incoming Constituent Union principal position holders, as trialled in the 2025-26 academic year. This will cover topics such as Leadership Skills; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Advocacy, Influencing, representing Postgraduates, and changemaking; Constituent Union financial training; and Events and Health and Safety. It will also include a meeting between each Constituent Union President and their assigned ICU Events Coordinator.

Constituent Union principal position holders, and the Clubs and Societies/Events/Activities Officers/Vice-Presidents/Chairs should also attend all relevant club and society training throughout the year. This will provide support on all activity-related processes including finances, room bookings, core risk assessments, health and safety, and events and trips.

Academic/Education and Welfare/Wellbeing Officers/Vice-Presidents/Chairs are required to attend Faculty and Department Representative training which takes place each June, covering the essentials of being a senior representative and their remits, as well as training on how to Chair meetings.

4.2.2 Optional

Additionally, Constituent Union Presidents, Academic/Education and Welfare/Wellbeing Officers/Vice-Presidents/Chairs will be invited to the annual Student Voice Conference in February led by the Representation Team. This covers topics including Leadership Elections, any ad hoc strategic ICU projects, and skill and career development sessions in collaboration with Imperial's careers team.

Constituent Union Presidents, Academic/Education and Welfare/Wellbeing Officers/Vice-Presidents/Chairs will also be encouraged to attend their relevant year representative training sessions in October-November where they can meet the year representatives in their faculty.

5. Financial management

Constituent Unions will receive support from ICU to manage finances effectively throughout the year and in preparation for annual budgeting. They will be part of ICU's financial policy decision making, annual budgeting and funding sub-committees as part of the Activities Forum.

Constituent Unions will receive support in the form of:

- 5.1 Systems to host all expenditure, income and financial/event budgets, as provided for all student groups
- 5.2 Training in how to access, manage and approve finances through ICU providing resources, training sessions and tailored meetings with the Activities Team
- 5.3 ICU's Activities Forum providing an opportunity to feed into the annual budgeting process and financial policies that affect how CUs and associated clubs/societies manage finances
- 5.4 Access to the Activities Team drop-in sessions and ticket portal to assist with queries, as provided for all student groups
- 5.5 Providing opportunities to gain additional funding from faculty, ICU funding streams and external partnerships

6. Next steps

Below outlines next steps that need to happen next to formalise this work, timelines, and responsibilities:

Deadline	Task	Responsibility
December	Set up shared resource space	Helena
January	Start collating and auditing existing materials in section 4.1 to identify what needs to be developed from scratch	Constituent Union Presidents
January	Develop role descriptions for: - Principal positions - Academic/Education Officers/Vice-Presidents/Chairs - Welfare/Wellbeing Officers/Vice-Presidents/Chairs	Helena and Constituent Union Presidents
February	Presented for note at Union Council	Helena and Constituent Union Presidents
February	Review Bye-Law L and Standing Orders	Helena; ICU Governance Manager Constituent Union Presidents
February	Circulate agreement to Imperial and alumni stakeholders	Helena and Constituent Union Presidents
March	Develop role descriptions for any new Postgraduate roles	Helena and Constituent Union Presidents
April	Create handover templates	Helena
May	Create and circulate resources to outline what effective representation looks like	Helena
May	Request handovers from committee members, including collating all risk assessments and event information for the year.	Constituent Union Presidents
May	Present overview of Constituent Union principal committee training day to outgoing committee	Helena, Activities Managers
May	Develop and communicate opportunities and processes to gain additional funding from faculties, ICU funding streams, and external partnerships	Activities Manager
June	Develop Memorandum of Understanding for Constituent Unions and Alumni Associations	DoMS and Constituent Union Presidents
June	Develop ICU annual activity calendar	Helena and DoMS
June	Develop Constituent Union annual activity calendars	Constituent Union Presidents
June	Deliver Constituent Union principal committee training day for incoming committee	Helena, Activities Managers