Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 25 February 2026

Union Council Chair Update

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Purpose: To report on the work of the Union Council Chair and Union Council

Decision: To note

1. Introduction

Since Board last met, there have been two Union Council meetings. ICU's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was also held, organised by Clem Jones and chaired by the Council Chair. We have also been working to implement the recommendations of the democracy review, such as an online suggestion drop-box and Council outreach stalls.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved in making Council work so far this year, not least Aisha Qadi (Democracy & Representation Assistant), Nicole Carmeni (Content & Communications Coordinator), Zahra Butt (ICU Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator), Ruben Kretek (Senior Web Developer), Helena Schofield (Representation Manager), Clem Jones (Governance & Executive Manager), Ashley Cory (Director of Support Services), Annie Willmot (Director of Membership Services).

2. Council 2 (9 December 2025)

The December meeting's agenda proved to be a heavily packed one.

Annie Willmot (ICU Director of Membership Services) led a consultation on the future of the Union's capital investment plan. This was followed by the discussion and eventual approval of six motions.

Council approved an interim update to Bye-Law F, proposing to remove certain postgraduate (PG) representation posts until the full review of PG representation is complete. Additionally Council voted to grant the Business School's "Constituent Union", the Dean's Student Advisory Council (DSAC), a seat on Council. It will be up to DSAC to nominate a member of their choice to represent them on Council.

A paper was passed in support of Imperial's renewal of Stonewall membership; another was passed in favour of advocating for Imperial to align with initiatives supporting open and fair access to medicines.

Council voted in favour of a motion critiquing Imperial's current framework for evaluating the sustainability of potential industry partners (e.g., fossil fuel companies). This will see the Union lobby for a re-evaluation of this framework. Finally, Council passed a motion calling for the University to reform the Graduate Teaching Assistant contracting model.

All papers discussed at this meeting can be found here.

3. Council 3 (10 February 2026)

In comparison to December, February saw a much quieter Council, with the focus being on the scrutiny and support of the Officer Trustees. This year we have been separating Council members into groups during the meeting to discuss a particular Officer Trustee's report. The groups are then required to, at least, ask a question, give one point of praise and give one point of constructive criticism to their assigned Officer. This seems to be helping with getting Council members to engage with the reports more than I have seen in previous years.

Additionally, the Union Bar Policy was renewed, and a separate Reynolds Bar Policy was created. These policies primarily deal with the memorabilia on display in these bars, including tankards.

4. Annual General Meeting (2 February 2026)

The Union hosted an Annual General Meeting for the first time in recent memory. While we were far from quorate, the ~ 25 attendees were engaged throughout the meeting. The meeting covered the financial accounts of the Union as well as time to ask the Officer Trustees about their work. We collected feedback following the AGM which is yet to be processed.

5. Council outreach stall (13 February 2026)

An outcome of the democracy review was to develop a communication plan for Council. This plan involves holding two outreach stalls this academic year, to chat to students about what they would like to see the Union do/lobby for and to raise awareness of the work that Council does. The first of these stalls was held on in the Abdus Salam Library entryway for 2.5 hours. Students could chat with the volunteer Council members at the stall and submit an idea for a change they would like to see at the Union, University or in the wider community (in exchange for sweets). These ideas have been collected and will be compiled to share with the representation team and relevant representatives, if necessary.



One of the volunteers at the stall (Jacob Eyre). Not pictured are two other volunteers, Apollo Yang and Anson To.

6. Suggestions

One of the democracy review recommendations involved creating an online platform for students to submit their suggestions for change at the Union, University or in the wider community. The idea is that this platform acts as a "catch-all" for students submitting feedback or ideas which can then be triaged by the Council Chair and the representation team. The hope is that this allows more student ideas to be discussed at Forums and ultimately passed as policy at Council. We have been working with the systems team to develop this. The platform will be called Suggestions and is expected to launch during the week commencing 17th January.

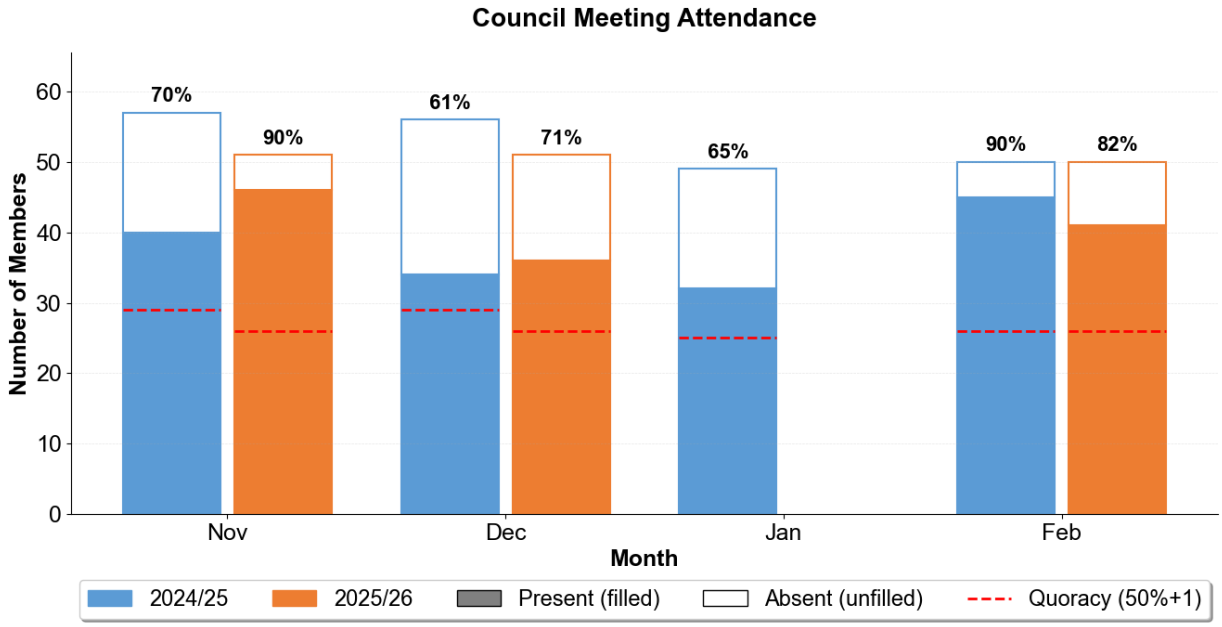
7. Attendance

Below is a figure demonstrating how Council attendance at the first three meetings of this year compares to those of the same period of the last academic year.

We saw a significantly greater proportion of members attending the first Council meeting this academic year than the last (90% vs 70%). This is likely due to mailing list issues at the beginning of the academic year 2024-25 which resulted in many members not receiving invites.

We did not have a meeting in January 2026 due to the reduction in the number of Council meetings, resulting from the democracy review.

There does not currently appear to be a considerable or consistent difference between attendance this year and last, however we will continue monitoring how attendance fares in the latter half of the year.



8. Remaining Council dates 2025-26

Union Council will take place on the following dates this academic year:

- 17 March 2026
- 26 May 2026 *
- 9 June 2026

Any member of the Board is welcome to attend Council; please let me know and I can send you the meeting details.

* This date is a placeholder meeting: it will be held in members' calendars but may be cancelled if there is not enough business to discuss.