Imperial College Union
Union Council / Tuesday 17th March 2026
Union Council Consultation: ICU Digital Strategy & Membership Engagement Plan

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Seconder(s): Nico Henry (Union President)

Decision(s): To consider

Union Notes

Imperial College Union received an open letter signed by student leaders and club and society members raising concerns about our digital systems and requesting a number of commitments going forward. ICU's Board of Trustees formally received and discussed the letter on Wednesday 25 February 2026.

ICU published a response to this on Monday 9 March 2026 on the website (see appendix A, or the Union website, for a copy of this response).

In summary, the decision to move to SUMS was made following a risk review by the Board of Trustees in 2022, which identified over-reliance on bespoke systems with no external support infrastructure. A task group, including student trustees and officers, spent eight months evaluating options, running focus groups and surveys, gathering requirements, and reviewing suppliers before recommending SUMS as the best solution. The intention was never to fully replace eActivities, but to retain what works well and migrate specific functions to SUMS over time.

The Union acknowledges that the online shop migration has caused operational disruption for clubs and societies. The Union is committed to a maximum two-day approval turnaround while further improvements are reviewed. The migration was faster than planned, driven by the expiry of the previous shop platform on a tight deadline.

Beyond SUMS, the letter raised broader concerns about digital strategy and governance. The Union recognises it has not done enough to keep students informed and work with them on changes and is committed to improving communications and transparency going forward.

The Union will be undertaking the following **consultation activities** to meaningfully seek and act on student feedback:

- Union staff co-designing solutions with Activities Forum, and attending forums such as Union Council for open discussion and feedback
- A student-wide online survey, with full results published
- 1:1s with student leaders, with documented follow-up actions
- Published feedback summaries showing how student input has shaped decisions

Council is invited to provide feedback on the planned consultation activities and suggest any additional ways the Union should engage with students throughout this process.

Appendix A: ICU Response to Open Letter regarding Union Digital Systems (published on ICU's website on Monday 9 March 2026)

Last week, we received an open letter signed by student leaders and club and society members raising concerns about our digital systems and requesting a number of commitments going forward. We want to formally acknowledge and respond to the concerns raised.

We want to be clear, there are areas where we have not met the standard you should expect, and we have not done enough to bring students with us through this process. We know that is frustrating, and we are sorry.

The open letter was received by our Trustee Board and discussed on Wednesday 25 March. Below, we outline the actions we have taken so far and how we intend to manage things differently going forward.

Why are we making changes to our systems?

The decision to move to SUMS was not taken recently, nor without significant consideration. In 2022, our Board of Trustees identified a risk in our digital systems. We were heavily reliant on bespoke systems with no external support if something went wrong. A task group, including student trustees and officers, spent eight months evaluating options, running focus groups and surveys, gathering requirements, and reviewing suppliers before recommending SUMS as the best solution. The intention was never to fully replace eActivities, but to retain what works well and migrate specific functions to SUMS over time.

We recognise that the online shop migration has caused operational disruption. Some of this comes from the new system working differently to what you were used to; some of it reflects the need for us to prioritise workarounds and adapt processes to fit your requirements. The transition was faster than we would have liked, driven by the expiry of our previous shop platform on a tight deadline. We are grateful for the feedback we have received on how this could have been handled better, and we want to be clear that we are actively working to address the challenges with the new online shop.

For example, items now require approval before going live, where previously they could be uploaded immediately. We understand this is a frustrating change. We are committed to achieving a maximum two-day approval turnaround and are reviewing further possible improvements, with proposed changes to be discussed with student leaders.

We also recognise that when processes take a long time, it becomes harder to understand the decisions behind them. We are committed to improving our communications and increasing transparency going forward.

Future consultation

We want this response to be the beginning of more productive, ongoing conversations. We will be undertaking a range of consultation activities to ensure we are meaningfully seeking and acting on student feedback, including:

- Union staff co-designing solutions with Activities Forum, and attending forums such as Union Council for open discussion and feedback
- A student-wide online survey, with full results published
- 1:1s with student leaders, with documented follow-up actions
- Published feedback summaries showing how student input has shaped decisions

A clear roadmap going forward

Upcoming planned changes include:

1. **By June 2026:** A user experience review of the ICU website and key systems
2. **By 1 September 2026:** EPOS tender completed (including ICU orders app replacement); migration to SUMS Elections platform
3. **By January 2027:** eActivities changes to improve user navigation

We will be working with students throughout all of these changes.

A commitment to transparency

We are committed to being more transparent across everything we do at ICU. We hope the steps above, as well as publishing meeting outcomes, our recent AGM, and ongoing updates, begin to demonstrate this. We know there is more work to do, and we are committed to doing it. We will continue working to understand better how to communicate with all students and how to consult on future changes.

In addition to keeping students informed through regular blogs, we will be reporting on progress at every management meeting and at each Trustee Board meeting until further notice.

Thank you for engaging with us constructively on this. We look forward to working together.