

Imperial College Union
Union Council / Tuesday 27th May 2026
Union Digital Systems & Membership Engagement Update

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Decision(s): To note

Union Notes

1. At Union Council on 17 March 2026, Council was presented with the ICU Digital Strategy & Membership Engagement Plan and invited to provide feedback on planned consultation activities. This paper provides a progress update against the commitments made at that meeting and in the published response to the student open letter.
2. At the March meeting, the Union committed to the following consultation activities:
 - i. Union staff co-designing solutions with Activities Forum, and attending forums such as Union Council for open discussion and feedback
 - ii. A student-wide online survey, with full results published
 - iii. 1:1s with student leaders, with documented follow-up actions
 - iv. Published feedback summaries showing how student input has shaped decisions
3. The following actions have been completed since the March paper:
 - i. Communications were sent to clubs and society committee members before Easter, inviting feedback and assuring them a digital roadmap was forthcoming
 - ii. A blog post was published in response to the open letter on 9 March 2026
 - iii. Quick fixes were actioned within Membership Services, including training the full Activities Team and reducing approval times to under 2 days
 - iv. 1:1 conversations were held with student leaders across a range of roles
 - v. A small focus group was conducted with students by the Advice Service including website user experience
 - vi. Possible fixes for SUMS shop issues have been outlined by the systems team
4. Feedback has been gathered via Union Council, targeted surveys, a small focus group and 1:1 conversations with student leaders. When asked at the March Union Council

meeting to describe their digital experience in one word, the most common responses from 34 attendees were: "frustrating" (13), "slow" (7), "hard to navigate" (3), "inconsistent" (2). Only a small minority responded positively: good (3), fine (2), okay (2), decent (1).

5. Key themes from the broader consultation were:
 - i. SUMS shop functionality (particularly the absence of product attribute/dropdown functionality and approval process) needs to be resolved as a priority. This is causing significant additional administrative burden for clubs and societies
 - ii. There is significant residual frustration about how the SUMS transition was handled. The broader sentiment is that changes are made without full transparency on the rationale
 - iii. Consistent across all consultation methods is the theme that the website is difficult to navigate, particularly on mobile, and students cannot easily find what they need
 - iv. Overall sentiment is cautiously optimistic with scepticism due to past experience (Democracy Review, SUMS shop). Students are willing to engage but need to see visible outcomes
6. Further consultation activities have been paused. It is recognised that there is a reputational risk in continuing to gather feedback without providing consequent action. The focus is now on delivering visible improvements, with students kept informed as actions are delivered.
7. In the short term, SUMS will provide a full timeline of required development and release changes to shop functionality during the week commencing 18 May 2026. This timetable will be released to clubs and society committees by the end of that week with further communications to the wider student body following this. Priority issues being addressed include product attribute functionality and assigning approval processes to student Management Committees.
8. Work on website user experience has not commenced on the original timeline committed to in March. However, student consultation has provided clear insight into required improvements, including functionality and accessibility. A longer-term digital strategy is being developed and this work will be incorporated into it.
9. The Union remains committed to the roadmap commitments made in the published response to the open letter:
 - i. **By June 2026:** A user experience review of the ICU website and key systems
 - ii. **By 1 September 2026:** EPOS tender completed (including ICU Orders App replacement); migration to SUMS Elections platform

iii. **By January 2027:** eActivities changes to improve user navigation

10. A paper is also being presented to the Board of Trustees on Wednesday 27th May with regards to this plan and the future digital strategy. The Union remains committed to working with the Board on any future governance and strategy in this area.

Union Believes

1. Students deserve a digital experience that is functional, accessible, and fit for purpose.
2. The Union has not yet met the standard students should expect, and there is more work to do, as acknowledged in the published response to the open letter.
3. Continuing to consult without action presents a greater reputational risk than moving forward with improvements based on feedback already received, and further consultation activities have therefore been paused while priority actions are delivered.
4. Transparency about timelines and progress is essential to maintaining student trust; students want to be spoken to honestly about what is and isn't working and will be kept informed as actions are delivered.
5. Students should be active partners in shaping the Union's digital future, not just consulted after decisions have been made.
6. SUMS will provide a full timeline of required shop development and release changes during the week commencing 18 May 2026, with priority work focused on resolving product attribute functionality and assigning approval processes to management committee members.
7. Progress against the roadmap commitments will continue to be reported to Union Council at future meetings.