

**Union Council / Tuesday 26th May
Democracy Review Update**

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Decision(s): To note

Union Notes

1. The Democracy Review has now transitioned into business as usual and is no longer being treated as a discrete formal project requiring regular update papers to Council.
2. Some aspects of the review are still being worked through, and ongoing workstreams will continue to be progressed.
3. A survey of student leaders is being conducted to gather some initial feedback on the impact of the review, covering a range of roles across undergraduate and postgraduate representatives, Officers, and Club and Society reps.
4. From 11 initial responses, feedback on transparency was mixed:
 - i. 3 respondents felt ICU had become much more transparent
 - ii. 5 felt there had been no change
 - iii. 2 felt ICU had become less transparent
5. The most cited barriers to participation were:
 - i. Lack of time
 - ii. Feeling that decisions are already made before reaching Council
 - iii. Difficulty influencing outcomes
 - iv. Lack of transparency and communication around decisions
 - v. Insufficient student oversight of commercial and governance matters
6. Several respondents noted positive changes resulting from the review, and individual efforts - particularly from the Council Chair and Union staff - were recognised and appreciated.
7. Some respondents expressed significant frustration with the review process, including concerns that the review had not delivered meaningful democratic improvement.
8. The majority of survey respondents indicated they are likely to remain engaged with Union democracy going forward.
9. A Board Effectiveness Review is currently underway, which is closely intertwined with the Democracy Review, particularly around governance transparency and accountability.

Union Believes

1. The Democracy Review has delivered some meaningful positive changes, though it is acknowledged that not all outcomes have landed well.
2. Transparency remains the clearest and most consistent ask from students, and there is still significant work to do to make this a lived reality rather than a stated principle.
3. It is important to listen to critical feedback honestly, including from those who feel frustrated or cynical about the process, as this reflects a genuine student experience that must be taken seriously.
4. Democratic improvement is not a one-off project but an ongoing commitment that requires continued collaboration with students.
5. The Board Effectiveness Review presents a further opportunity to advance the aims of the Democracy Review, particularly around governance transparency and the relationship between the Board, Officers, and Council, and will be brought to Union Council in due course.

6. Students should be active partners in shaping what transparency looks like in practice, not just consulted after decisions have been made.
7. While formal project reporting will not continue, the work is not finished, and relevant developments will be brought to Council as needed.
8. Continued work with students on the practical themes emerging from survey feedback including improving communication around decisions, better signposting of roles and committees, and ensuring students feel their voices genuinely shape outcomes, remains a priority.