Imperial College Union (ICU)
Finance, Audit & Risk (FAR) / Closed minutes of 24 June 2026 meeting at 2pm
MS Teams / Minutes follow the agenda order

Matters identified as confidential to the committee and redacted indicated by [X]

1. Welcome & Attendance

Committee Members Present

Bulbul Basu (BB)
Nico Henry (NH) – until 3pm
Emina Hogas (EH) - until 3pm
Sai Venkateshwaran (SV)
Tom Gordon (TG)
Yasmin Baker (YB)
Nick Marley (NM) in the Chair

Staff/Guests in Attendance

Clem Jones (CJ) – Governance & Executive Manager
David Ashton (DA) – Financial Controller
Peter Greaney (PG) – External Director of Finance
Michelle Lam (ML) – Head of Finance (University Secretary & Education) - IC Finance Division
Tom Newman (TN) – Managing Director
Rob Pegg (RP) – Director of Commercial Services
Annie Willmot (AW) – Interim Director of Membership Services (Maternity Cover)
Lucy Brown (LB) – Student Activities Manager (Events) – Item 10 only
Rob Fenner (RF) – Student Activities Manager (Operations) – Items 11 and 12 only

NM welcomed everyone to the last FAR meeting of the academic year. NM welcomed LM who replaces Niki Ashra-Thakore as the University representative on FAR. NM welcomed feedback from members on FAR meetings, either via direct contact with him or via CJ.

Apologies

NOTED NH and EH's apologies in advance for needing to leave at around 3pm to attend Senate.

2. Minutes, Action Tracker & Matters Arising

Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 25 March 2026

APPROVED the draft minutes of the previous meeting as an accurate record of proceedings without amendment.

Action Tracker

NM led the meeting through actions on the tracker listed as due for a verbal update at the meeting, including the governance of Imperial Union Trading Limited (IUT), insurance arrangements, sponsorship processes, board effectiveness review, and draft policies on student group debt and donations, with contributions from TN, AW, DA and others, as below: -

- *IUT Governance Update:* There was an action from the February 2026 FAR meeting to clarify the governance/decision-making processes between the charity (ICU) and subsidiary (IUT Ltd), so that, for example, IUT directors can make a decision to set the objective of wanting IUT Ltd operations to be aligned with London Living Wage (LLW) if they so wish. TN reported that the governance arrangements between the two entities was discussed at a recent Board of Directors meeting.
- *Insurance Arrangements***:** TN explained that insurance is managed through Howdens, a specialist student union provider, with all policies now aligned to renew in August. The renewal documents will be circulated to the committee once received, and the combined insurance covers various aspects including minibus fleet, directors and officers liability, terrorism cover, and personal accident cover for sports clubs.

Action: TN to circulate insurance renewal documents to FAR.

- *Sponsorship Process Challenges:* AW described ongoing challenges with sponsorship contracts for clubs that cannot use standard ICU templates, noting that legal support has been secured for these cases. The process for handling non-standard contracts is being clarified, with a need for board decisions on risk appetite and legal support funding.

Action: AW to write up and clearly outline the proposed process for handling non-standard sponsorship contracts and ensure accurate handover to Cat Turhan (CT).

- *Board Effectiveness Review:* TN shared that the external consultant's board effectiveness review is at the final draft stage, with feedback being incorporated. The review's findings will be integrated into the strategic risk register discussion at the August meeting, particularly regarding any changes to the risk profile.

Action: TN to Feed the findings of the board effectiveness review into the August meeting's discussion on the strategic risk register, highlighting any changes to the risk profile.

Matters Arising

- *Draft Policies on Debt and Donations***:** NM noted he, TG and DA had discussed student group deficits and a policy around donations. DA outlined the policy on student group debt has been drafted, proposing a debt management plan for overspending societies, and regarding draft policy on donations, this proposes setting thresholds for checks on large donations and ensuring alignment with union values. DA noted that both policies are pending feedback and are expected to be reviewed at the next meeting.

Action: DA to circulate draft Student Group Debt Policy to AW for feedback before the next FAR meeting, and to present the draft Donations Policy, outlining thresholds and checks, for review and approval at the next FAR meeting.

- *Audit Tender:* NM noted normal practice would be to re-tender every five years, but noted risks associated with changing auditors during the first year of having accounts to audit for IUT Ltd and 'group accounts' for ICU. NM noted he will meet the audit partner on 22 July 2026 to discuss the proposal to extend the incumbent's term to a sixth year on this occasion.

3. Declaration of Any Conflicts of Interest

No potential COIs were raised by any committee members present at this point of the meeting.

4. Identification of Starred / Confidential Items

Starred Items

NM noted starred Item 15. There were no requests to unstar this item.

Confidential Business

No confidential business was identified.

5. May 2026 Management Accounts

6. Expected Outturn 2025/2026

PG presented Items 5 and 6, and papers FAR/25-26/39-40, together, highlighting that the Union is expected to finish the financial year with a total surplus of £148k (compared with a forecast of £67k) subject to changes relating to the historic catering VAT liability provision. with RP providing updates on commercial performance. PG also highlighted the reasons for variances including staff vacancies and additional bank interest income.

i. ML queried if underspend related to non-delivery of activity in year. PG noted that variances mainly related staffing vacancies where activity has been able to be delivered creatively during interim periods, with no material impact on delivery. PG also reiterated that the bank interest provides additional income.
ii. NM noted being behind budget on student staff training and maintenance in Beit Bars and asked if planned activity is still being delivered. RP noted regarding student staff training that the team planned for more recruitment training in January than was eventually needed, as more casual staff stayed on than anticipated; RP noted that some of this variance will phase out as more casual staff are now being onboarded. RP noted regarding maintenance that some work had been for arranged for June instead and that the budget is likely to be spent by year end and may even go over.
iii. NM noted that Beit Catering is spending more than planned on staff costs and asked if this is a consequence of returning catering in house. RP noted that volumes are broadly as expected but there are challenges with fresh produce delivery; RP noted there will be a full menu review in July.

PG noted that the outturn estimate does not include any correction relating to the historic catering VAT provision, the review of which has been recently concluded by HMRC. PG noted that the Union originally anticipated an additional £92k correction to last year's provision, however, a recent HMRC communication indicated an additional positive adjustment in the Union's favour relating to interest calculation, meaning that the Union now expects a £120k correction to the prior year's provision, improving this year's anticipated result. The committee discussed the need to clarify strategic/capital investment plans now that the HMRC review outcome is known.

NOTED the May 2026 Management Accounts Summary and NOTED the Expected Outturn 2025/2026.

7. Draft Budget 2026/2027 (including discussion on Reynolds Bar)

PG presented paper FAR/25-26/41 - the draft 2026-2027 budget, noting that the university block grant level to be awarded is subject to formal documentation being issued confirming this. PG outlined that the budget aims to break even on core activities, with commercial contributions supporting the overall position.

The committee discussed contingencies if the President's Fund is unavailable to help fund activities that remain unfunded following the block grant request, with TN noting that alternative funding sources or changes to delivery models may be needed.

The committee discussed the performance and challenges of Reynolds Bar, with RP explaining its ongoing losses and YB highlighting its importance to the medical student community. NOTED options include continuing to subsidise it as a service or considering closure, with an agenda item to be prepared for the August meeting.

Action: RP to prepare a discussion item/paper for August 2026 FAR agenda.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND the 2026-2027 budgets for the Union and the trading subsidiary to the ICU Board of Trustees for final approval.

8. Banking Strategy

PG presented paper FAR/25-26/42, noting FAR that previously concluded in February 2025 that ICU should aim to have 2-3 bank accounts. PG noted the delay to implementation whilst opening a bank account for the subsidiary was prioritised. PG outlined options for opening additional bank

accounts with Virgin Money, Nationwide or via the Charity Aid Foundation platform to spread risk, given the current concentration of funds with one banker and the FSCS protection limit. PG noted opening new accounts is administratively complex due to the union's unincorporated status, so any new accounts would be opened after 1 August with the incoming trustees. The amount to be invested would be determined based on cash flow and reserves targets.

APPROVED the proposed strategy and AUTHORISED PG and team to proceed with opening new accounts based on further research, with a focus on minimising risk and considering the impact on interest rates.

9. Update on Student Temp Agency

RP presented paper FAR/25-26/43, highlighting that the student temp agency (Impowered) is now live, accepting student applications and conducting outreach within the university; the initial phase targets internal temporary employment, [X]. The following points were covered in discussion:

- Operational Model and Costs: The agency operates with minimal additional infrastructure costs, leveraging existing systems for staffing and payroll. The main cost is a single staff member, [X].
- Visa Compliance and Risk Mitigation: TN emphasised the critical risk of students on tier 4 visas exceeding permitted working hours, which could jeopardise both student visas and the university's sponsor status. A new HR system has been implemented to prevent any breaches, with dual system testing underway.
- Responsibilities and Induction: BB asked about responsibility for monitoring working hours; RP clarified that both students and the university share responsibility, with clear agreements and induction processes in place to ensure compliance.
- Next Steps and Reporting: NM requested a verbal update at the next meeting on the outcome of system tests and any further work required, with RP confirming ongoing dual system testing and readiness to report back.

Action: RP to provide a verbal update at the next meeting confirming the outcome of the system testing.

NOTED the Student Temp Agency update.

10. Safe Adventures Report: Implementation Plan

LB presented paper FAR/25-26/44, presenting an action plan aligned with the Safe Adventures report's six principles, aiming to complete most actions by the start of the committee year or term. Key actions include reviewing risk assessments, formalising technical advisor roles, and clarifying responsibilities for students and committees. The following points were discussed:

- Inclusion of Non-Adventure Groups: Lucy noted a gap has been identified in procedures for non-adventure groups running adventure activities, and proposed interim measures such as requiring collaboration with experienced groups until a formal process is established.
- Monitoring and Audit: TN and LB discussed the need for ongoing monitoring, auditing, and maintaining relationships with committees to ensure compliance and continuous improvement in safety practices.

- Committee Engagement and Feedback**:** LB confirmed that adventure activity groups were engaged throughout the report's development, with direct communication, focus groups, and opportunities for feedback, which informed the implementation plan.
- Reporting and Next Steps**:** NM requested an update paper for the October meeting to confirm completion of actions and coverage of non-adventure groups, with a verbal update in August if there are any delays.

Action: LB to prepare an update paper for the October 2026 FAR meeting, with CT to flag in the August 2026 if there are any delays to implementation.

11. Activities Development Fund (AFG) Designation for 2026/2027

NM welcomed RF to the meeting. RF presented paper FAR/25-26/45.

RF noted the level of ADF allocated to groups in-year has been c2.5x higher than last year.

RF noted that CSP grant underspends at year end have typically been allocated to ADF.

TG noted that the request is for the ADF Designated Fund to be 'topped up' with whatever amount of unspent club and society grant money is left by 31 July 2026, up to the ADF cap of £100k, after which point any remaining club and society grant underspends would be returned to ICU general funds / the Strategic Investment Fund (SIF).

RF stated that, of the £425k provisional total amount of grant funding available to clubs and societies last year, £15k of it was allocated/ring-fenced for Harlington transport; RF stated that this method of funding Harlington transport was to provide a cheaper solution for student groups.

RF stated that he and TG wished to propose ring-fencing £15k of unspent 25/26 club and society grant to be allocated for Harlington transport, rather than having that sum returned to general funds/SIF.

RF stated that this would mean not having to scale down the club and society grants for 26/27 any further than they currently have been. RF welcomed feedback on the suggestion.

The discussion moved straight into Item 12.

12. Provisional Club and Society Grant Allocations for 2026/2027

PG noted that paper FAR/25-2026/46 refers to £425k as the provisional total amount of Grant Funding available; PG advised that £446k has now been secured as part of the university block grant request for an inflationary increase. RF noted that if the suggestion per Item 15 - to use £15k from 25/26 club and society underspends to fund 26/27 Harlington transport - is accepted, then the inflationary increase to the total amount of Grant Funding available essentially reduces the amount by which each individual student group allocation will need to be scaled down.

i. NM asked about appeals. RF noted appeals have concluded since the paper was submitted.
ii. NM asked whether the disparity between the total amount requested and the total amount allocated in recent years was due to student groups attempting obtain the best amount possible for their group or whether the Union does not make the necessary amount of funding available to groups in order for groups to be able undertake their activities. RF

noted the jump in the years 24/25 to 25/26 budgeted for was likely due to improved training and process changes, whereas there has been a plateau between this year and last year. RF suggested that the amount of unspent grant each year may suggest a failure of process to some extent. The Chair suggested that if there are any improvements that can be made to the process for next year over the next four months then that would be welcome, otherwise the best course of action may be continuing to learn more over the course of the next academic year.

The Chair asked if there were any objections to recommending the paper to the Board of Trustees next month for approval, subject to updating the total amount of grant funding available and therefore any associated scaling required after appeals. There were no such objections.

13. Student Experience Fund – Interim Governance Framework.

CJ presented paper FAR/25-26/47.

APPROVED the Interim Governance Framework for the Student Experience Fund as outlined in paper FAR/25-26/47.

14. Strategic Risk Register

TN presented paper FAR/25-26/48 - the strategic risk register, highlighting changes in risk levels, updates on EPOS and digital strategy, and the impact of increasing student numbers. The following points were covered in discussion:

- Risk Rating Changes: TN highlighted reductions in certain risks due to budget confirmation and commercial income performance, while highlighting ongoing risks related to funding for core activities and compliance with Charity Commission requirements for student group activities.
- EPOS and Digital Strategy Updates: RP reported on the EPOS system tender process, with student and staff consultations planned before a final decision. AW updated on digital strategy progress, including improvements to the shop function and website based on student feedback.
- Student Numbers and Service Provision: ML raised concerns about the impact of increasing student numbers on services, with TN confirming that service provision and multi-campus strategy are being reviewed to address future growth, particularly with the upcoming White City expansion.

NOTED the Strategic Risk Register.

15. Health & Safety Policy Suite Review & Update Plan

RECEIVED paper FAR/25-26/49 as a starred item and therefore NOTED the scope of the Health & Safety policy review, the process being followed, and the intention to seek full approval of the revised policy suite at the August 2026 FAR meeting.

16. Trading Subsidiary (IUT Ltd) Update

NOTED that recruitment for a new independent external non-executive director for IUT Ltd is ongoing, with the intention to use networks and LinkedIn before considering a recruitment firm if necessary.

NOTED that IUT accounts will be audited, with an estimated fee of £10k, to demonstrate compliance and governance, especially as this is the first year of operation.

17. Any Other Business (AOB)

NM thanked retiring members of the committee for their input over the past academic year.

18. Committee discussion without Union staff present

There was a discussion held between members of the committee without ICU staff present.