

Trustee Board
11th January 2011

Imperial College Union
Online Claims Processing
A note by the Deputy President (Finance & Services)

Background

- Currently all claims made by Clubs, Societies & Projects are processed via paper forms. This process is particularly cumbersome for Clubs, Societies & Projects Officers who need the correct constitutional authorization, and the signature of an Honorary Senior Treasurer (HST). The HST then signs the cheque to be written, and the Union President or Operations Manager countersigns all cheques over £1000.
- After a discussion with both the Executive Committee and the Clubs & Societies Board (CSB), we have begun to review the current role of HST's and the claim form process.
- eActivities (The Union's online system for Club & Society members) handles various functions including finance pages. It was the Union's intention to eventually move income, and claim forms online. Currently Purchase Order Processing (POP) is nearing at completion, and will be part of this system.
- It is evident from CSB that the area of most benefit to club officers would be to have the functionality of being able to complete and submit claims electronically. This in turn has caused a reprioritization to make this happen. The current project completion date is August 1st 2011.
- This will be integrated into the e-Activities system and also be used by internal Union staff for their claims.
- In 2009/10 approximately 2500 cheques were written for Club & Society Purposes; many of these were for suppliers.
- In the online claim form system, we hope to use digital documentation, possibly in the form of scanned evidence, and streamline the authorization process.

Advantages

- The staff time required to manually transfer paper claim forms to the finance system is reduced to nearly zero as students will do this as part of the process. The additional cost of BACS payments over cheques equate to roughly £380 for the year, which is negligible compare to the saving in casual and full-time staff cost required to do the same job currently.
- The numerous claims made for suppliers will no longer be processed using the claim system, instead POP will handle it.
- Students & staff will be paid more quickly and efficiently via BACS payment.
- The new authorization requirements would mean that at least two officers in responsibility are scrutinizing a claim.
- There is added time saving by removing the requirement for HST's signing off all claims.
- Students & staff will know which stage in the process their claim is in, and when payment was made.
- A fully traceable history of claims and supporting documentation (electronically), with notes as to why any changes to the claim form have been made.

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Current Stage in the process

- The Deputy President (Finance & Services) and Deputy President (Clubs & Societies) have been working closely with various members of Union staff to create user requirements documentation. Once this is in its final form, a technical specification will be created and the project will begin.
- A risk assessment is currently being written by the Union finance team
- The Central Services team is currently working on costing, timing and impact on other projects.
- The Deputy President (Finance & Services) and Central Services Manager are working on possible solution for online documentation. The Operations Manger will be investigating any legal and audit requirements for this requirement.
- The Operations Manager will be talking to Counter Culture who will be reviewing all of our financial procedures, and this should be part of the scope.
- The President and Deputy President (Finance & Services) will be writing amendments to the Imperial College Union Constitution to go to Union Council for approval.
- The Deputy President (Finance & Services) will be consulting with current HSTs about possible changes to their role and their preferred system for approving claim forms moving forward.

Action for the Trustee board

- The Trustee Board will in the future have to approve and advise on both the constitutional changes and the possible use of online documentation as evidence for claims. Due to the short time scales of this project this would need to be done via email, or an Interim Trustee Board meeting.