

## Felix – Independent Review

### Research Brief

#### Introduction

Imperial College Union seeks to commission an independent consultant or organisation to undertake research and generate recommendations relating to the future support, development and growth of Felix, its student newspaper.

Imperial College Union's strategic commitments include developing student communities, ensuring our members' voices are heard, and providing excellent personal and professional development opportunities, as well as building upon our unique history and traditions.

Felix is one of the UK's oldest student newspapers, having been in print continuously since 1949, offering hundreds of students every year the opportunity to develop their skills in journalism, writing, design, and volunteer management. As one of Imperial College Union's 370+ student-led Clubs, Societies and Projects, Felix is one of our most important assets. To ensure we are providing the best possible service to our members, we seek to address challenges facing Felix, such as its financial model, volunteer experience, and governance structure, to secure the provision of a sector-leading student newspaper for the foreseeable future.

As Imperial College Union enters a new strategic cycle and continues to seek to improve the student experience wherever possible, the Board of Trustees and the current Felix Editor have agreed that an independent review would be beneficial to help Imperial College Union understand how to best support Felix and ensure it continues to be a leading example of its kind.

#### Research Aim

To provide Imperial College Union and Felix leadership with the analysis and information required to make strategic and operational decisions that secure the long-term success and development of Felix.

#### Research objectives

Imperial College Union seeks analysis and recommendations on the following areas of discussion:

##### *Core purpose*

We seek analysis and recommendations about how best to establish and capture the core purpose(s) of Felix, to clearly communicate and articulate its guiding editorial principles and goals.

##### *Student expectations of content*

We expect analysis to be developed through short interviews with relevant stakeholders, so a range of views and expectations of Felix can inform the review outcomes.

##### *Funding model*

We seek analysis and recommendations about the optimal financial structure for Felix.

This includes research into the strengths and weaknesses of the current structure, including costs (salary, equipment, software, printing, training, professional development) and income (advertising, sponsorship, donations). We would expect comparative analysis against the financial models used by other successful student newspapers in the UK and elsewhere, with recommendations on their

applicability or otherwise in an Imperial College London context. Financial information about Felix will be provided.

We would like to note that while the Felix Editor supports this Review and is actively engaged in its delivery, he explicitly opposes the inclusion of a discussion point that could potentially lead to questioning of the existence of the paid Editor role. All parties have agreed that this stance will be clearly communicated whenever necessary.

#### *Use of varying media*

We seek analysis and recommendations about best practice in the use of a range of media and channels, such as print, online, and social media.

#### *Governance and accountability structures*

We seek analysis and recommendations about how to effectively define and clarify the governance responsibilities held by different parties, such as the Felix editorial team, elected student leadership, ICU staff and the Board of Trustees. In particular we seek recommendations about how to capture these in policy and how to implement them operationally.

#### *Legal compliance structures and the provision of legal advice and support*

We seek analysis and recommendations about how to support the Felix editorial team, ICU staff and the Board in complying with their respective relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

#### *Editorial and volunteer structure*

We seek analysis and recommendations on the optimal editorial and volunteer structure for Felix, as well as how to improve the present volunteer experience to improve volunteer retention and maximise the personal and professional development opportunities for all Felix participants.

#### *Relationship with Imperial College Union and Imperial College London*

We seek analysis and recommendations on how proposed models could benefit relationships between the Felix editorial team, ICU staff, and our elected student leadership, and College staff, while maintaining editorial independence.

### **Stakeholders and relevant parties**

We expect there to be engagement, primarily through interviews, with the following groups:

- Felix editorial leadership (past and present)
- Representatives of Imperial College Union's membership
- ICU staff
- ICU student leadership
- ICL staff
- Student newspapers at other students' unions

### **Methodology**

We invite suggestions from interested parties about the appropriate research methodologies. Our current expectations are for a blend of desk-based research about existing practice at Imperial College Union and other student newspapers and students' unions, paired with interviews with key stakeholders.

**Timescale**

We aim to begin this review this summer, in order for its recommendations and outputs to be considered by our governance and democratic structures from the start of the new academic year in October 2017 onwards.

**Output**

We expect a document with structured analysis of the discussion points given above, paired with clear and realistic recommendations for tackling any challenges and taking advantage of any opportunities identified.

**Proposals**

Respondents are asked to submit their research proposal in response to this brief, outlining the following:

- Their proposed methodology and research plan
- Their relevant skills and experience
- Their proposed budget

**Charitable status**

Imperial College Union is a registered charity and such, would appreciate fee submissions discounted from full commercial market rates. While we reserve the right not to appoint the lowest bidder, lower fee submissions will be considered more favourably than higher fee submissions.

**Contact details**

Interested parties are asked to contact Andrew Keenan, Head of Student Voice & Communications at Imperial College Union, on [a.keenan@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:a.keenan@imperial.ac.uk) or 020 7594 5387.