



**Imperial College Union Communications Committee
29 January 2019**

AGENDA ITEM NO.	7
TITLE	Leadership Elections 19 – conduct and update
AUTHOR	Keriann Lee
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The project management of LE19 has sought to address shortcomings identified by the LE18 Review on the conduct of the 2018 poll whilst also responding to the feedback from students in general, Union Council in particular, as well as this committee.</p> <p>Improvements have been made in the area of staffing, processes, risk management, and student facing activities.</p>
PURPOSE	For the committee to note the measures which have been put in place to address the adverse findings of the LE18 Review in keeping with its remit to provide oversight of these elections.
DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED	To note the changes and provide a steer on their adequacy

Introduction

- Governance Committee agreed that its oversight of elections should involve *ensuring that adequate programme management plans are in place to support all three key election cycles, by ensuring that a well-supported elections working group is in place with clear membership, terms of reference and staff support;*
- Governance Committee also agreed that its meeting of 7 February 2019 should *focus on election integrity: rule enforcement, RO/DRO support and risk management;*
- The Leadership Elections 2018 were subject to a review following poor performance in its project management and the findings were published to this committee by the Union's Managing Director with recommendations for future exercises adopted;

This paper seeks to have the committee note the steps which have been and are being taken to address the findings of the 2018 review, ensure the successful delivery of The Leadership Elections 2019, and address processes which undermined the integrity or perception of integrity in the process.

Improvements to LE19:

The following summarises the student facing and project management improvements which have been made to LE19 based on the LE18 Review, feedback from students in general, and Union Council in particular.

- **Project management improvements:**

The LE18 Review conducted by the Managing Director of the Union made findings around the conduct of the elections and subsequent recommendations for improving its management in successive years. These recommendations formed the basis for the planning of LE19 which is now underway. Specific responses to each finding and the corrective steps for LE19 have all been addressed in a paper to Communications Committee of 29 January with a response to each specific finding. **See Appendix B for findings and the responses.**

- **Student facing improvements:**

Dates: Campaigning opens five clear days, but only two and half College days before voting opens. Campaigning begins Wednesday 6 March while voting starts Monday 11 March. This varies from 2018 when voting and campaigning began at the same time, and did not allow enough opportunity for voters to get to know candidates before having to make a decision. This was thought to favour less well known candidates and undermine the strength of Union democracy. The campaign period for LE19 was chosen this year to avoid that, and but was kept short enough to avoid the stress of a lengthy campaign on participants, as also happened in previous years. Widespread discussions around the dates also occurred in advance of them being published, which helped avoid confusion for students as happened in LE18 when

changes happened mid process and were unclear to the Elections WG.

Meet the Candidates: LE19 Debate will return to a student-centred approach with ICTV and IC Radio hosting the event with a live audience of students.

The media groups have agreed to:

- Organise the actual debate with a running order, provide a host, write questions based on embargoed manifestos provided 24 hours beforehand and engage the audience.
- Live stream online on the Union's Facebook page
- Invite candidates
- Provide a budget for any reasonable needs so it can be agreed ahead of event
- Felix will publish manifestos on Friday 8 March
- Felix will give front page prominence to major milestones including start of nominations, start of voting and will cover the elections with features on various roles

Elections Team has agreed to:

- Promote the debate event
- Provide the manifestos 24 hours ahead of official release on limited access basis
- Curate questions from students on social media for inclusion in debate when nominations close
- Accept any reasonable and agreed costs submitted ahead of debate event
- Submit manifestos to Felix at close of submissions on limited access basis
- Provide full page ad and press releases to Felix for timelines, etc.

Complaints, Sanctions, Appeals: The complaints process has been streamlined and made more transparent and user friendly, with revised sanctions that are more enforceable and consistently applied, a more transparent and user-friendly complaints journey and a clear appeals process for disqualifications, with daily reports on resolutions. There will also be more time for complaints handling after the close of voting. Voting closed at 14:00 on 14 March and complaints deadline will be 10:00 the following morning. This allows enough time for consideration and submission of complaints.

Complaints:

Principles behind the changes:

- Complainants should be made aware of resolutions to their submissions and have timely updates on their handling.
- Sanctions should be enforceable and applied consistently by the DROs and must manifestly appear that way
- The channel for appeals must be different than the route through which the decision was made

- The window for appeals must be the same on the last day of voting as it was throughout the campaign

New complaints journey

Complainant logs in to *dot org* - fills in and submits form - Complainant gets automated email of acknowledgement – complaint data show up in DRO spreadsheet – DRO assigns the case – DROs clicks this in Flow – Complainant gets an email that the case is being investigated – DRO investigates and either makes a decision or requests more evidence from complainant and then makes a decision – DRO clicks that a decision has been made in Flow – Complainant gets automated email saying *complaint upheld* or *complaint not upheld* with one of predetermined reasons specified for rejection – accused gets an email only if upheld to say which rules they have breached and the sanction – if the sanction is a warning, the case is closed. If it's a suspension of campaign, the case is closed. If it's a DQ - DRO submits evidence and recommendation for DQ to Returning Officer – RO assesses and decides – RO communicates decision to DROs – DRO chooses this decision option in Flow - complainant gets an automated email saying they have been disqualified, with the specific reason why, the appeals form attached, the email address for appeals, the fact that they have 24 hours to appeal and what will happen to their email. For what happens next – see appeals flow chart below

Changes to sanctions:

LE18 sanctions:

- Warnings
- Fines
- Disqualification

Revised sanctions list for LE19:

- Warnings
- Reduction of budget refunds
- Suspension of campaigns *
- Disqualification

***Suspension of campaigns means the following:**

- No new activities of any kind from candidate or surrogates including but not limited to:
 - digital postings
 - printed materials
 - events
 - face to face activities

- discussions
- For a period of two (2) hours at the very next lunch time (defined as the period between 12:00 – 14:00 Mon – Friday) after the decision is made.
- Notice will be put in the voting system for the specified two hours that the person’s campaign has been suspended for the period.
- If there is a breach of the suspension, the candidate is subject to disqualification.

Flow for appeals

Disqualified candidate submits email to appeals inbox – Governance Committee Chair appeals admin and DROs see the email – if it’s been submitted within the specified time, DROs send RO decision bundle to the GC Chair – GC Chair convenes committee excluding conflicted members - decides the case and informs the RO and DROs – the case admin informs the candidate via the appeals inbox – the candidate is simultaneously removed from the election – the decision is final.

A paper on the changes has been taken to Union Council by the President who was part of the reform group. The reform group included the two DROs, Head of Student Voice & Communications (project manager), along with the two Systems leads who manage the Union’s voting system Please see **Appendix B** or https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/18-19/Union_Council/file/5336

Appendix A

Introduction

The Leadership Elections not only play a critical role in maintaining the Union’s democratic structures and are a mandatory exercise, but it’s the most prominent communications campaign conducted annually by the Union. It is therefore a high-risk activity with reputational and governance consequences for the Union if not properly managed.

The 2018 Leadership Elections were subject to a review following poor performance in its project management and disaffection among students. The findings were published to this committee by the Union’s Managing Director with recommendations for future exercises adopted.

In keeping with the requirement that the Board of Trustees should have oversight of these elections through its relevant sub-committees, and in anticipation of another such election, this paper seeks to outline the steps which have been or are being taken to address the findings of the 2018 review in the project management of LE19.

2018 Findings / 2019 Actions

Below are specific responses to the *Findings* which informed the *Recommendations*,

including what actions are or have been taken to address them for LE19.

1.

Review:

There was insufficient separation between accountability and responsibility. The project lead took too many administrative tasks which were then not completed as/when required.

LE19: Each area of responsibility for the elections has been identified and organised in a matrix which clearly identifies who is accountable, who is responsible, who should be consulted or merely informed. The matrix identifies the Head of Student Voice & Communications (HoSVC) as accountable for all tasks, but reduces that role's responsibility for specific task deliveries. This frees the HoSVC to act as a project manager shaping and directing the activities towards the desired objectives. Without a Marketing & Communications Manager, the project manager will still have to undertake a lot of communications related tasks which will undermine this. However, this is offset by the fact that the branding and other mass communication will not change this year making the production aspect of the campaign less onerous. There is also an additional marketing coordinator in the Marketing Team to offset pressures.

In addition, administrative support has been identified within the Union to provide support during the period of the elections. The Project Coordinator has been reassigned to the Elections Team for the duration of the project.

2.

Review:

The Elections Team was inadequately administered; participants should have been better supported to understand their specific allocated tasks.

LE19:

The RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted, informed) Matrix was devised with all senior members of the Elections Team, so there is both knowledge and consensus of who is responsible for specific tasks. The matrix is used as the basis for meeting with notes updated within the matrix. There is follow up by the PM outside of meetings on specific tasks among different work streams with the stipulation that the project manager be involved in all subgroups.

3.

Review:

The new timetable was inadequately implemented, leading to occasional confusion within the Elections Team and widespread confusion amongst candidates.

LE19:

The bye-laws require notification of major elections five clear College days before nominations and extensive discussions have been had around the timetable well before then, with all views and considerations allowed to contend before they were finalized. This began six months ahead of the expected start of nominations. Having had widespread

feedback, taking into account the findings of the *Review* and previous concerns from students and candidates around different dates and intervals, the opportunity for confusion has been lessened as discussions have been exhausted in the appropriate forums before mass communication to students. The Elections Team were also part of the discussions around date changes so will not be caught off guard by changes which have now been fixed ahead of the required timeline.

4.

Review:

There was poor communication with media groups, including Felix and ICTV, reducing the quality of the Live Debates and risking the coverage within three Felix issues.

LE19:

All three relevant media societies: ICTV, IC Radio, and Felix have already been engaged and committed to hosting the event and providing coverage including front page prominence for key dates. ICTV and IC radio will both host the debate in Metric with a live audience, providing the full set up and asking questions which should make the event student-centred. They will also host a live stream on FB with access to the main Union account. The Election team has committed to providing promotion, curation of some questions from students following the close of nominations, limited and embargoed access to the manifestos 24 hours ahead of the debate so questions can be formulated, along with any other budgetary requirements that have been agreed.

5.

Review

There were errors in election materials, primarily an offensive error being made with regards to the name of the Disabilities Officer position.

LE19:

Copy editing is a critical function of all communications processes since writers generally find it challenging to notice their own errors. It's therefore standard protocol that another competent pair of eyes or more, look over any printed material, particularly if voluminous. The project manager acted as the copy editor but did not catch the error and due to the time constraints which beset the project, it did not enjoy wide distribution before printing deadline. This year, all printed material, as is standard for items like Impact and Annual Reports and Welcome handbooks will be widely reviewed to increase the odds of noticing errors which are almost always contained in initial drafts.

6.

Review

There was inadequate communication of the work of the DROs, leading to a perception that rules were being enforced unevenly and without transparency.

LE19:

The complaints procedure is being mapped to ensure it flows well for students, with revisions to the form, and plans for a web page where daily reports will be posted on the types of complaints received that day, the rules which relate to those complaints along with a general resolutions report. This should help clarify the rules and provide transparency without violating any issues of confidence which was part of the reason for the previous opacity. Individual complainants will also receive an email as a basic guarantee.

7.

Review

The volume of communications work for DROs on top of the decision-making remit is too great for additional responsibilities to their existing roles.

LE19:

The admin support role description during the period of voting will solely involve full time monitoring of the elections inbox and the complaints, feeding issues to the DROs for resolution, and communicating decisions, with supervision. This should reduce the burden on DROs.

8.

Review

Candidate Briefing and training sessions were poorly communicated and therefore poorly attended.

LE19:

The Head of Student Experience along with the Student Development Manager will be responsible, for the first time, for ascertaining the learning and development needs of candidates and devising appropriate training material. They will deliver online and drop in sessions during the nominations period on *Writing Manifestos* and *Inclusive Campaigns*, while the Candidate's Briefing just before campaigning will still be conducted by the HoSVC and DROs since that session will explore election rules and anticipates questions around the election itself. The dates for the briefings will be communicated at the start of the nomination period and will have as much exposure as the debate and results party. It will also be communicated at the point of nomination so candidates know what to expect immediately.

9.

Review

There was a lack of success measures for the elections cycle other than turnout.

LE19:

The success measures for this election were agreed previously and includes metrics around increased nominations per role, increased diversity of candidates, as well as more PG engagement.

Communications-specific Recommendations:

The *Review* made a number of communications related recommendations but did not outline its findings. The recommendations have been addressed below.

Recommendation	2019 actions
Begin election planning next year with a thorough discussion of what the aims of communication should be, ensuring all communications from the Union are in accord with these aims.	Done through the metric setting process with <i>diversity of candidates and voter participation</i> emphasized, along with <i>PG engagement</i> and a focus on more <i>realistic and detailed role descriptions to attract motivated candidates who understand the job and can run on realistic platforms</i> . The secondary objectives of <i>rehabilitating the Union's reputation</i> around elections and <i>re-inspiring trust</i> in our processes are also important aims.
Put in place a form of structured oversight for communications, ensuring sub-editing is standard protocol.	Already in place and is standard protocol for communications material. See above. The marketing manager and communications team should have been consulted for this communication review, as the Disabilities Officer error was due to poor copy editing rather than a lack of it, as well as a rush to print which prevented more widespread review of material due to the inadequate communication which beset the entire project last year.
Put in place a set timeline at the beginning of the planning process, and do not change it beyond a certain date, e.g. end of Winter term.	This was done this year with discussion of LE dates, metrics, and ways to address the findings of the review starting in the summer of the current academic year.
Ensure the timeline for LEs does not clash with other campaigns, prioritising the LEs wherever possible.	Because the elections are two months long in a busy term, it is difficult to not have any clashes, but LE will always be prioritized and dates have been arranged accordingly. There is no other major campaign for the voting period.
Improve coverage to non-SK campuses, with both publicity material and staff support available.	This was a major weakness of last year's campaign and will be corrected with deeper engagement which has already started with outreach to Silwood, White City, Hammersmith, and Charing Cross as well as residences.
For each aspect of the communication strategy, identify which stakeholders need	This was done last year and will, be a feature of this campaign. However, the

<p>to be involved, when they should be contacted, and by whom.</p>	<p>Communications Team was not responsible for a centralized plan, but rather the mass communicated printed material, while critical channels such as email were diffused among several people with no accountability or coordination. Email titles and language sent did not adhere to the campaign messaging established by the comms team and were too long with no tracking of open and click through rates.</p>
<p>Offer a space on the elections working group to at least one OT as standard.</p>	<p>The President co-chairs the Elections WG but will have to recuse should he develop interest in running, as in previous years. It is not considered appropriate to have students who may run or have close association with candidates involved in the group directly administering the election as this could appear to be an unfair advantage and exposed the Union to reputational risk. This is not uncommon practice in student unions. With current oversight levels at Board sub-committees and Council, where rules and other key decisions are made, there is less need to have the OTs playing a direct role in rolling out the election itself and is ill-advised for the above.</p>

Appendix B

Elections Update to Council

Rob Tomkies – Union President

Background

This paper is to note rather than to vote on. Following last year's elections an in-depth review process was completed incorporating recommendations made from Council, OTs and DROs.

Two papers were passed at Council. Firstly, one outlining recommendations for the next set of major elections (Paper 1 **[1]**). This outlined the following "Union Resolves":

1. To make it standard procedure to make the complainant aware of exactly what action was taken as soon as a complaint is handled.
2. To add a formal appeals process allowing the complainants and relevant candidate(s) to appeal as soon as a complaint is handled.
3. To ensure that campaigning rules explicitly:
 - a. disallow candidates from encouraging other students to sign up to a society with intent to gain votes from these students;
 - b. define and prevent the act of bribery.
4. To ensure that statistics are published about the number and type of complaints received, and the number and type of infractions given in order to improve transparency.

Secondly a paper outlining recommended changes to the election's timeline (Paper 2 **[2]**) – this passed with amendments **[3]**. This paper passed outlining that there should be a period of campaigning before voting as opened whilst still ensuring a shorter period of campaigning than two weeks to make running as inclusive and stress free as possible.

This report outlines the changes that have been implemented as a result of these recommendations and then other changes implemented this year to make the election run as smoothly and as stress free for candidates as possible.

Actions Taken – Paper 1

Point 1:

Previously complainants only received an email when the complaint had been received and when enquiring what the result of the investigation was they would get a message saying it "had been handled". A new system has been implemented so that the complainant will automatically receive notifications when the DROs reach three different stages of the investigation. This standardised process is outlined in Appendix A.

Point 2:

Previously the appeals process was occluded and outlined you had to appeal to the body that sanctioned disqualifications in the first place – all of which was not advertised clearly in

the first place. This year the process has been fixed and clarified. Appeals only relate to disqualification sanctions. The disqualification and then appeals process is shown in Appendix B – A candidate facing diagram will be included on the election’s website. Only the accused can appeal a sanction – if new evidence comes to light a new complaint may be submitted.

Point 3:

These will both been taken into account.

Point 4:

Statistics will now be published on the elections page and updated daily to provide information on the type of complaints coming through – improving transparency and acting as a deterrent for other candidates.

[Deletion]

The table above shows the timeline for this year. This was sent to last years council by Head of Student Voice and Communications (then Andrew Keenan). The following changes from last year are noted:

- The Debate in its original format including ICTV, IC radio etc have been re-introduced. This has been placed deliberately before voting opens so that voters are as informed as possible when voting opens.
- A day has been added between voting closes and results revealed so that a meaningful period is given for last minute complaints and appeals. This we hope will help avoid confusing come results night with having to delay the reveal of the winner or having to retrospectively change the result due to a latter appeal.
- Originally voting closed on the Wednesday with results released on the Friday however Governance Committee raised concerns for student welfare having to wait two days for results to be announced. For this reason, voting will be closed on the Thursday with group activities provided for candidates on the Thursday evening to help distract until results released on the Friday. For background the decision was made to not extend the campaigning until Friday to respect previous council’s observations that an extended (two week) campaigning period is detrimental to candidate’s wellbeing and can have serious impacts on a candidates degree.

Further Changes

Introduction of a mid-level sanction:

In previous elections the DRO and the RO have only had the stated disciplinary power of:

- Warning
- Fine
- Disqualification
- “Set rules, regulations and guidelines other than these election Bye-Laws to govern the conduct of the election.”

Fines are never awarded as a standard sanction due to the imbalance of how much it will affect individuals of varying wealth and socioeconomic status – it is only used in the occasion of serious malicious monetary damage being done to a candidate or facilities. This leaves only two stated sanctions - both polarised ends in severity and so in reality many sanctions were left to the discretion of the DROs. To help introduce a more standard, balanced set of sanctions a third standard sanction has been introduced – suspension from campaigning. This sanction has been commonly used throughout the past couple of years however never standardised. Introduction of a standardised sanction will lead to a more parable experience between candidates.

Suspension of campaigns means the following:

- No new activities of any kind from candidate or surrogates including but not limited to:
 - o digital postings
 - o printed materials
 - o events
 - o face to face activities
 - o discussions
- For a period of two (2) hours at the very next lunch time (defined as the period between 12:00 -14:00 Mon – Friday) after the decision is made. If offense occurs on the last day – the sanction will apply for the remainder of the voting period.
- Notice will be put in the voting system for the specified two hours that the person’s manifesto has been suspended for the period.
- If there is a breach of the suspension and this is deemed a rule break, the candidate is subject to disqualification.

References

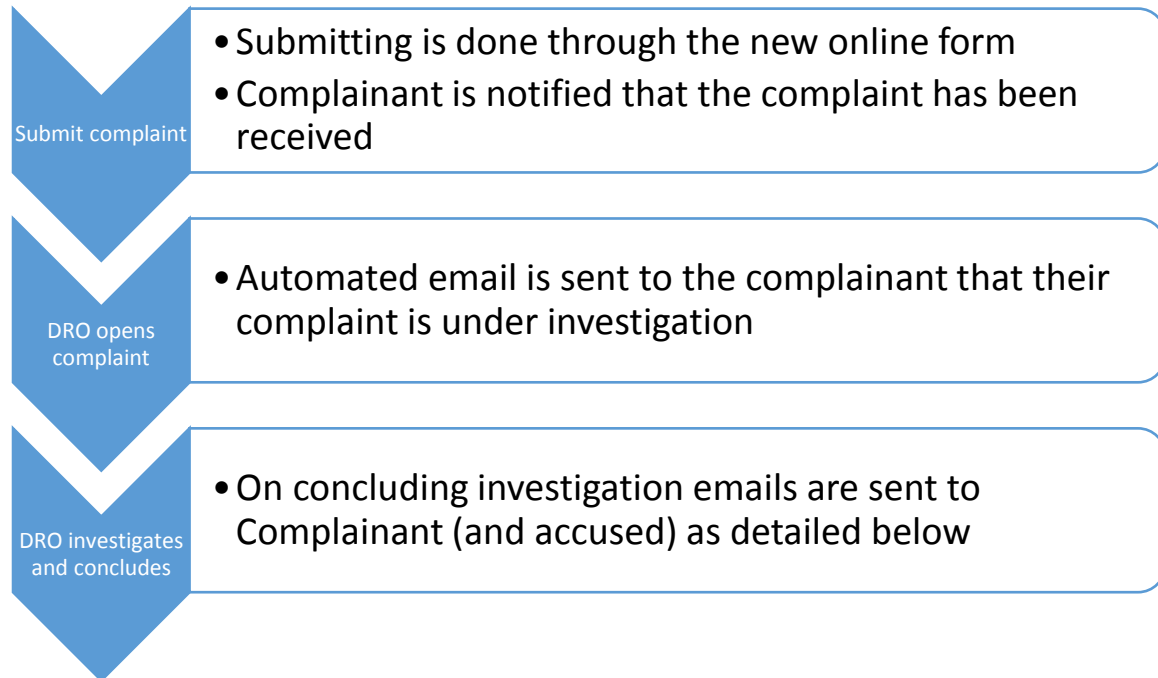
[1] https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/17-18/Union_Council/file/4195

[2] https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/17-18/Union_Council/file/4500

[3] https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/17-18/Union_Council/file/4512

Appendix A – Standard procedure for complaints

Process



Concluding Emails from DRO

If complaint upheld:

- Complainant will receive an email detailing that their complaint has been upheld
- This email will also state that they can see general statistics of the rules broken and sanctions published daily on the elections page on the Union website.
- The accused will receive an email detailing the rules they have broken and the sanctions that have been enforced. These will be one of:
 - A warning
 - A fine
 - A suspension from campaigning
 - Disqualification from elections

If complaint is not upheld:

- Complainant will receive an email detailing that their complaint has not been upheld and provide the reasoning which will be 1 or more of:
 - Evidence not sufficient
 - Complaint previously investigated
 - Not considered a rule break
 - Evidence not admissible
- Accused receives no communication.

Appendix B – Disqualification and Appeals Process

DQ is recommended by the DRO

- This has to be sense checked by both DROs before being referred to the Returning Officer.
- An email detailing all evidence and previous incidents is sent to the returning officer outlining the reasoning for the referral.

The RO reviews the evidence and either upholds or not.

- If the complaint and DQ is not upheld in the complaint is returned to the DROs to sanction as per Appendix A. No grounds for appeal.
- If the complaint is upheld and DQ is enforced an email is sent out to the accused as per Appendix A. If the candidate accepts the sanction the process ends.

The accused feels they have grounds to appeal

- Appeals must be sent in within 24 hours of the sanctioning email.
- The reasons to be able to appeal the disqualifications are:
 - 1 - Procedural irregularity in the conduct of the election's disciplinary procedure
 - 2 - The evidence supplied is inadmissible
 - 3 - The disproportionate nature of the penalty

They email the specific appeals email address within 24 hours

- This immediately notifies governance committee that an appeal is coming and so they assemble an appeals panel.
- The appeals panel reviews the case and any new information provided and either do not or do uphold the decision. The appeals panels decision is final.