

**Imperial College Union
Board of Trustees / 15 February 2023**

Operational Planning Framework

- Author(s): Tom Newman (Managing Director)
Rob Scully (Chief Financial Officer)
- Purpose: To document the approach to operational planning in a strategic context, and provide a draft timeline for operational planning.
- Approval(s): To approve the principles of CSP grant allocations, to be supported by a full policy to FAR in March

1. Introduction

Effective operational planning is vital to support sustained strategic success. It is the deliberate process of turning strategic vision and ambition into operational reality, delivering services and outcomes for our members.

In support of the *Back to Basics* strategy, teams have developed Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) which prioritise and articulate their work plan for the year ahead. There are a number of challenges with this approach:

- i. There is a clearly defined annual timeframe (August – July) for the document, which meant that incomplete or partially complete projects might fall off the radar or not make it into the following year's plan
- ii. The link between the strategy and operational plans was often tenuous and managers felt like they had to shoehorn their plans into strategic boxes
- iii. The lack of clear KPI targets associated with the strategy can make progress difficult to measure
- iv. Where there are interdependencies between teams, these could be missed or not prioritised consistently (particularly between directorates)
- v. The process and timeline for operational planning was not coordinated with budgets and financial planning
- vi. AOPs were finalised in July, before incoming officers were inducted, which risks resources not being available to deliver officer priorities

As we enter a new strategic cycle, it is important that there is a clear operational planning framework in place to deliver activity. Whilst the content of plans will need to respond to and reflect the strategy once approved, it is felt that socialising and embedding the process for this planning first will be advantageous.

2. Operational Planning Principles

The operational planning framework will be based on principles, rather than a strict set of rules, and managers will be consulted on the best way to document and articulate plans. These proposed principles are:

- i. Operational plans will be live documents that are regularly reviewed and consider the whole strategic period, whilst focusing on 'the next 12 months'
- ii. There will be quarterly reviews of progress against each operational plan by Management Committee
- iii. Operational plans for Membership Services and Commercial Services will primarily focus on achieving strategic aims and clearly articulate the impact they will have on strategic KPIs and PIs

- iv. Operational plans for Support Services will focus on supporting the operational plans of the other directorates (although they may include projects that directly achieve strategic aims where appropriate)
- v. Operational planning will include consideration of risk on an ongoing basis. Risk registers will be integrated into operational plans

3. Operational Planning Timelines

Following the principle of a 'rolling' 12-month, an indicative timeline has been developed for the three years (this is included in Appendix 1). The timeline attempts to align financial and operational planning, and create a quarterly review cycle to ensure the plans remain 'live' throughout the period – due to the cyclical nature of much of what we do, this means that the operational planning for recurrent activities will take place shortly after the activity has last taken place.

A more detailed timeline for the rest of this academic year is:

15 Feb 2023	Approach presented to Board of Trustees for approval
Feb-March 2023	Operational Management Group consulted on detailed timelines, documentation and reporting requirements Reforecast for 2022/23 budget undertaken
22 March 2023	Reforecast for 2022/23 budget and high-level 3-year budget presented to Finance, Audit & Risk for approval
March-May 2023	Draft operational plans developed by teams (this will be alongside strategic development)
19 July 2023	Strategy approved by Board of Trustees
Aug-Sept 2023	Operational plans reviewed by teams and KPIs / PIs developed to support strategy
September 2023	A summary of operational plans presented to Board of Trustees

4. 2023/24 Budget Planning

As in previous years, the budget principles and assumptions will be presented to Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee in March. This meeting will also receive an updated CSP Grant Allocation Policy, which will govern the principles by which CSP grants are allocated and strengthen Trustees' application of their responsibilities under the Education Act to ensure a transparent and fair process.

Due to the timeframes involved in the CSP budgeting process, some work needs to commence in advance of March, and therefore we are requesting Trustee approval to proceed under the following principles (all of which will be reflected in the detailed policy that goes to FAR for approval prior to any conclusion of the process):

- i. All groups should go through, and have equal access to the same process (with a slight difference for Management Committees and Constituent Unions who sit above CPSs in the hierarchy)
- ii. All groups will receive the same communication in relation to the process of applying for grant
- iii. It will be made clear to all groups how decisions are to be made and by whom

5. Recommendation

The Board of Trustees are asked to approve the approach to operational planning and the principles, which will be developed into a full framework.

Appendix 1 – Draft Timetable

		Operational Plan (Membership / Commercial)	Operational Plan (Support Services)	Budget	Strategy
2022/23	January				
	February			Reforecast 2022/23	
	March				
	April				
	May	Operational draft		Budget 2023/24+	
	June				
	July				New strategy approved
2023/24	August	Operational plan agreed			
	September		Review		
	October				
	November	Review			
	December		Review		
	January				
	February	Review		Reforecast 2023/24	
	March		Review		
	April				
	May	Review		Budget 2024/25+	
June		Review			
July				Review	
2024/25	August	Refresh			
	September		Refresh		
	October				
	November	Review			
	December		Review		
	January				
	February	Review		Reforecast 2024/25	
	March		Review		
	April				
	May	Review		Budget 2025/26+	
June		Review			
July				Review	
2025/26	August	Refresh			
	September		Refresh		
	October				
	November	Review			
	December		Review		
	January				
	February	Review		Reforecast 2025/26	
	March		Review		
	April				
	May	Review		Budget 2026/27+	
June		Review			
July				Review	