

Imperial College Union
Council Chair Report
A note by the Council Chair – Michael Foster

There have been only two Council meetings since the last meeting of the Trustee Board. Surprisingly, for the busy time of year, they were both quorate, and a lot of important year-end business was wrapped up.

Sabbatical Remits

Among other minor modifications to the Union Bye-Laws, Council approved changes to the remits of Sabbatical Officers, especially that of the Deputy President (Finance & Services). For brevity's sake, I refer you to the changes document submitted to the Board for approval, which contains the details.

Unpaid Internships

Following a discussion on to what extent the Union should condone unpaid internships, a paper was brought to Council by the President summarizing the beliefs and resolutions of the members. In brief, Council resolved not to support unpaid internships from companies that could afford to pay interns, which excluded non-profits and start-ups. The Union itself will only advertise paid internships, but may affiliate to organizations that advertise unpaid internships for organizations without the means to pay.

Postgraduate Accommodation

A paper of the provision of postgraduate (PG) accommodation was brought to Council by the Deputy President (Welfare), accompanied by two residents of postgraduate halls. PG accommodation is provided for the College in partnership with GradPad, a private company.

The paper concerned the restrictive prices and payment structures on GradPad accommodation. Prospective residents are only offered 51-week contracts, and students without a UK-based guarantor are required to pay the full 51 weeks in advance. As a comparison, undergraduates in similar situations are not required to pay in full, and students engaging with private landlords typically only pay 6 months' rent in advance if without a suitable guarantor. Further, the rent for the year is greater than the full PhD stipend, rendering it inaccessible to students without an alternative source of income.

Council resolved to lobby College to develop a strategy to provide a range of accommodation options for PGs, along with greater financial support. Additionally, it resolved to lobby College and GradPad to allow more flexible payment options for international PG students.

Grade Point Averages

In response to conversations at the Aldwych Group (the students' unions of the Russell Group universities), the Deputy President (Education) brought a paper to Council discussing the use of a Grade Point Average (GPA) degree classification system in the UK. It is important to note that this is not currently a proposal from College, but rather a response in anticipation of any discussion. Council resolved to oppose a GPA system.

Postgraduate Healthcare

As I write this, Imperial College Health Centre has announced that it is restoring healthcare provision to PG students from 1 August 2013, regardless of their home address, bringing PG provision back in line with UG provision.

Union Awards

Council ratified the decisions of the Awards Committee. Of note, Fellowship was awarded to Lorraine Craig, and Fellowships with Distinction were awarded to Stephen Richardson and Nathaniel Bottrell. Council also voted on awarding Honorary Life Memberships to all the Sabbatical Trustees, the Felix Editor and the ICSMSU President.

Handover

It is with a mixture of relief and sadness that I hand the Chair of Council to Richard Bennett. It has been an enjoyable and productive Council year, and I wish him every success.

Michael Foster
28 June 2013