

Proposer: Shamim Ahmed (Interfaith Officer)

Seconders: Christopher Kaye - Deputy President (Welfare), Alex Savell – Deputy President (Finance & Services)

Motion To Lobby College For A Definitive Lunch Hour

The Union Notes:

1. Lunch-hour/s across campus range from 12-2pm; some departments/faculties only accommodate lunch from 1-2pm
2. No specific time for Lunch stipulated by college which is applicable to all departments and faculties
3. Imperial College is committed to religious tolerance, understanding and co-operation and every effort is made to meet the practical needs of staff and students whatever their faith background.
4. Ensure that students are not disadvantaged due to religious commitments
5. Many religious practices are taking place during lunch-times
 - *Thursday lunchtime - Roman Catholic Mass - 1-2 pm*
 - *Friday lunchtime - Muslim Prayer Time - 1-2 pm¹*
 - *Friday afternoons (Autumn and Winter) - Jewish Sabbath²*
6. It is an obligation upon Muslims to perform the congregational Friday prayers during Friday lunchtime
7. It is an obligation upon Jews to begin preparations on Friday afternoon for the Sabbath holiday
8. Many observant Jews have been unable to attend lectures/laboratories on Friday evenings due to faith commitments.

The Union Believes:

1. Improve the provision of information to the College community in respect of the academic timetable.
2. It is important for students to be free to fulfill their religious obligations without being at any disadvantage in their academic studies.
3. That according to the Clubs & Societies policy*, the Union has a duty to ensure that resources are provided for welfare needs
4. That students should have the right and access to provisions to practise their religion.

The Union Resolves:

1. To lobby the College to stipulates a definite Lunch period from 1-2pm for both Staff and Student timetables.
2. To lobby the College and other relevant bodies on behalf of Muslim and Jewish students to protect periods for religious observance, including Friday lunchtime (1-2pm) for Muslim Friday service and Friday afternoons (Autumn and Winter)

¹ Appendix 1A and 1B

² Appendix 2A

for the Jewish Sabbath by providing suitable alternatives such as lecture recordings etc.

3. To lobby the College to take steps to ensure students who are unable to attend due to religious obligations are not disadvantaged. This may include: the provision of repeat sessions; making electronic recordings available on the relevant virtual learning environment; making available alternative learning materials, ensuring Labs sessions are avoided on Friday evenings in the Winter³.

*** Clubs & Societies Policy**, point 10 of section B (DUTIES OF THE UNION AND CLUBS & SOCIETIES)

10. The Union shall provide a safe environment, free from harassment and discrimination for all Union activity (according to the Health & Safety and Equal Opportunities Policies). The above point refers to the Health and Safety policy; point 4 is of particular interest:

4. Imperial College Union acknowledges its duty to ensure that all relevant legislation regarding health, safety and **welfare is adhered to and that resources are made available to ensure health, safety and welfare.**

Appendix

1. Muslim Medic Account – Yusuf Patrick (2nd Year Representative, Medicine)

- A. As a Muslim Medical student and a second year academic representative for the year, I have found that among Muslim Medical students the most frequent non-academic complaint is associated with the clashing of timetabled lectures or practical sessions with Friday prayers. The permanent allocation of the Friday lunch timeslot from 01:00pm - 02:00pm is seen by many students to be a necessary step to avoid students having to compromise their religious practice in order to ensure success in their academic life.
- B. Friday Prayers for Medical students are catered for on all campuses with year one and two students being able to pray at both the South Kensington Campus, in the Union building, and at the Charing Cross, in the local sports hall. Meanwhile the older years who are on placements have sufficient facilities for Friday prayers at the various sites due to this normally being organised by the chaplain of the respective hospital. This means that the students have adequate facilities which are in close proximity in order to carry out the Friday prayers, with the only hindrance being problems in timetabling which means that students are unable to both carry out their religious and academic duties. An example of this can be seen in how some Muslim students leave anatomy sessions early in order to pray Friday prayers, they

³ Appendix 2B

are unable to complete all of the learning objectives in this shortened time period thus endangering their own academic performance, as they are not receiving the same amount of teaching as other students due to their fulfilment of religious duties.

- C. From my discussion with older and younger years, I have found that the issue of timetabling clashes with Friday prayers has been a problem for several years and despite it being a topic which is raised by academic year representatives frequently, it still occurs due to oversights by timetabling or scarce availability of lecturers. The years that it is worst for are the first and second years due to their timetables being more lecture and practical based, with the clinical years having a more flexible timetable which allows for easier integration of the Friday prayers. An example of this oversight can be seen in the Medicine year 2 where a redesign of the dissection portion of our course has led to an extension of these sessions, which means these sessions now are preventing Muslim students from completing their Friday prayers. It is only with a college wide policy that oversights such as this can be prevented from occurring, as it would mean that when redesigning courses or specific session the different faculties would be required to keep this Friday timeslot in mind, which would ensure that students could fulfil both their academic and religious duties.
- D. This issue of Friday prayer is an important one for the Medical student body, with it effecting 35 students in Medicine year 2 which means it effects 13% of Year 2 students and it is an issue that has reoccurred over several years of students. Many students myself included feel that this issue could finally be sorted out with a college wide policy similar to those present in other universities, until then Muslim students will be required to compromise either their academic studies or religious duties due to lack of proper accommodation by their timetable.

2. **Jews and the Sabbath - Friday Afternoons in the Winter (Tamar Roth, 2nd Year Mechanical Engineering, Jewish Society Interfaith Officer)**

- A. Observant Jews observe the Sabbath from 20 minutes before sunset on Friday evening to 40 minutes after sunset on Saturday. They don't write, cook, travel in motorised vehicles or carry out any other fuel-burning activities. For an Imperial College undergraduate in mechanical engineering, this causes certain challenges;
- Sunset in London in the middle of the winter can be as early as 4 pm.
 - Jews need to be home when the Sabbath begins in order to prepare - this might mean leaving Imperial as early as 2.30 pm on a winter Friday afternoon.
 - Many labs and tutorials are scheduled on Friday. Some of these are compulsory. All are valuable.

B. What the university can do to resolve the issue

The university can resolve the whole issue by implementing these simple rules.

• **Allowing observant Jews to make arrangements to reorganise Friday afternoon labs in the winter**

Many undergraduate lab sessions take place both on Thursday and on Friday afternoons. Sometimes it is possible for Jews to swap Friday for Thursday sessions and sometimes it is possible, with the consent of the lab technicians, to begin a Friday afternoon lab slightly earlier in order to finish it before the Sabbath begins. The university could ask its teaching staff to support these informal arrangements

• **Allowing observant Jews to make arrangements to reorganise Friday afternoon tutorials in the winter**

Many undergraduate tutorial sessions take place on Friday afternoons. But Jews can reorganise tutorials by arrangement with the tutor. Again, the university could ask its teaching staff to support these arrangements

• **No mandatory attendance on Friday afternoons without alternatives.**

Some tutorial sessions are mandatory. If an undergraduate misses them then expulsion from the course may result. The university could ensure that all mandatory sessions on Friday afternoons have an alternative timing as well.