

Imperial College Union

Stance on International Student Fees in response to COVID-19

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Union notes:

1. International taught student tuition fees have been increasing and are already very high. Currently for 2019/20 undergraduates fees are <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/fees-and-funding/tuition-fees/>:
Engineering: ~£31,750; **Medicine:** ~£44,000; **Natural Sciences:** ~£30,000
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has directly affected the financial circumstances of students in various unforeseen ways:
 - Loss of part-time jobs / being furloughed
 - Family bereavement
 - General economic downturn and uncertainty
3. A survey run by the International Officer, sent to all taught students in early October, received at least 200 individually written responses. Outcomes of the survey indicate:
 - Many international students require financial support or leniency on tuition fees due to circumstances out of their control, directly caused by the pandemic
 - Perception of reduced value of education due to remote learning (not utilising the school facilities)
 - Consensus on tuition fees being too high in the current global pandemic
4. Payments of tuition fees in instalments require 1% service fee (for 2 separate payments). This is not in line with common practices among London universities.
 - Students might reasonably prefer to pay in instalments during times of economic uncertainty
 - The London School of Economic and Political Sciences, University College London allow 3 separate payments with no additional fee
[\[https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Finance-Division/Fees-Income-and-Credit-Control/Tuition-Fees\]](https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Finance-Division/Fees-Income-and-Credit-Control/Tuition-Fees) [\[https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/fees/pay-your-fees/when-to-pay\]](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/fees/pay-your-fees/when-to-pay)
5. From 20/21 onwards there will be an increased proportion of students paying international fees due to Brexit.

Union believes:

1. International fees are too high considering the current pandemic
2. It's unreasonable for students to suffer because of circumstances beyond their control

3. The College's financial position is much more secure than was expected before the start of this academic year, although they are unlikely to countenance substantial across the board fee reductions.
4. There is a need for greater transparency on how tuition fees are spent (LSE: <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Finance-Division/Fees-Income-and-Credit-Control/How-are-your-tuition-fees-spent>) and the fee-setting process
5. There is a need to acknowledge students are not getting as much value from their fees in the 2020/21 academic year, compared to prior years
6. It is reasonable to lobby for:
 - 6.1. Case by case reductions based on hardship
 - 6.2. Making the case to suspend or limit extra costs incurred from paying by instalments
 - 6.3. Suspending or limiting increases on coming years

Union resolves:

1. To support lobbying efforts along the lines of Union believes point 6.
2. To action the International Student Network to meet with relevant College staff
 - a. To gather more information about how fees are levied/spent and how hardship funding has hitherto been distributed
 - b. To lobby the College to make reasonable accommodations to fees following the principles set out above (6.2/6.3 above)
3. That the International officer should report back to next Council meeting with an update