

Imperial College Union
Amending the Sabbatical Accommodation Policy: A Discussion
A paper by the Deputy President-elect (Finance & Services)

Background

Currently, holders of sabbatical office (Sabbaticals) are expected to take a room in halls for the duration of their term, as laid out in the Sabbatical Accommodation Policy. The cost of the room is paid by the Union and is provided as an untaxed benefit-in-kind.

The same policy states that if a Sabbatical wishes to live out of halls, he or she must seek permission from Council. If granted, the Sabbatical is eligible to receive an honorarium equal to 75% of the average rents of price band D rooms, which is then subject to tax.

Issues

Holders of sabbatical office that are allowed to live out have this honorarium taxed at 20%, meaning their effective honorarium is actually 60% of average rents. Conversely, Sabbaticals living in halls are not taxed for their accommodation.

This creates a rather large discrepancy between the remunerations of Sabbaticals in the same role. It is worth noting, however, that the cost of living in halls is higher, and we should avoid taking any action that would dissuade Sabbaticals from taking a room in halls. Council agreed that 75% was an appropriate level to pay, but tax implications were not considered. It is therefore worth considering scaling this level up so that the post-tax level is 75%, as opposed to 60% currently. This would mean increasing the pre-tax honorarium to 93.75% of the average rent of price band D rooms.

This paper is being brought to the Executive Committee for discussion, but the agreement will need to be taken to Council for decision, as it involves amending the original Council policy. Additionally, there is a very real potential of a conflict of interest. Indeed, it may be appropriate to have Council's decision taken to Trustee Board for ratification; not only will this be the best way to minimize conflict of interest, but Trustee Board has the responsibility for approving the remuneration of Sabbatical Officers.

Proposals

- To agree, in principle, that the honorarium paid to holders of sabbatical office should be increased to 93.75% of the average rent of price band D rooms, so that the post-tax level is 75%.
- To put a paper to Council, taking into account the opinion of the Executive Committee, proposing to amend the original Sabbatical Accommodation Policy.
- To refer the final decision to Trustee Board for ratification.

Appendix

Sabbatical Accommodation Policy –
Passed by Union Council 17th May 2010

1. Imperial College Union strongly supports the use of rooms in halls of residence by senior officers of the Union as it is vital to maintaining the connection between officers and the student body, and allowing officers to work effectively for the Union.
2. Holders of sabbatical positions, including the Sabbatical Officers, ICSMSU President and the Felix Editor, will be offered a room in price band 'D', available in Beit, Prince's Gardens or Evelyn Gardens, subject to approval from Residences.
3. If officers wish to decline their offer of a hall room for any period, they may do so only with the prior permission of Council. The designated room will be re-allocated by Residences, so an officer who has declined a room will not be able to take a room in halls at a later date.
4. If officers wish to live in accommodation other than their designated halls room, they may only do so with the prior permission of Council and will be afforded no assistance from the Union in obtaining that accommodation.
5. Rooms will only be allocated to officers prior to the start of the academic year. If a position is filled during the academic year the officer will not be able to live in halls of residence.
6. Any unallocated rooms will be returned to Residences for re-allocation.
7. As details of officers taking up rooms are required by Residences considerably prior to the start of the academic year, preferences must be submitted to the Governance Coordinator by the 1st May. If an officer-elect does not accept their offer of a room or is out of contact every effort having been made to contact them by the time details are needed by Residences, they will be deemed to have rejected their offer.
8. The Union shall pay the full rent for holders of sabbatical office living in halls or shall pay an honorarium equal to 93.75% of the average rent of price band 'D' rooms¹, should rent not be payable to College, on behalf of sabbatical officers.
9. The President is responsible for running and enforcing this policy and will rule in the event of a dispute.

¹ This is the gross level. Net level is 75%, taking into account 20% income tax.