

Imperial College Union
London Student Manifesto
A Paper by ICU President – Scott Heath

Background

On Thursday May 3, London shall elect a Mayor and the representatives for the London Assembly. Any student who is over 18 and lives in a property in the Greater London will be eligible to vote.

As per our Constitution, we are here to 'promote and encourage interest [of] students in matters outside of the College curriculum' as well as represent the 'needs and interests of our members.'

At a time like an election, this is highly achievable.

The Deputy President (Education) and I have working closely with the Student Unions from LSE, Queen Mary's, King's College and others. The result of our collaborative work is the 'London Student Manifesto,' a document of pledges designed to be endorsed by Mayoral Candidates in order to make progress on many London-centric student issues.

The document was purposefully made apolitical and, due to such, has gained the support of many London Student Unions.

It is anticipated that a gathering of representatives from all supporting Student Unions will occur in mid-late February, with the aim to publically endorse the document.

It is hoped that this event, along with institute-specific activities, will increase awareness of the pledges and create the necessary media coverage to get candidates to endorse.

As this document is collaborative, there is no scope to amend the document.

It can be viewed as the appendix to this Paper.

Beliefs

I believe Imperial College Union should be a signatory at this event and thus that this council should endorse the London Student Manifesto.

Action

To decide whether to endorse the London Student Manifesto.

Appendix: London Student Manifesto

London Student Manifesto 2011

Crime

Demand

'We want students to be involved in decisions about policing student activities and events.'

Problem

Recent policing decisions made and the tactics used by the Metropolitan Police have severely damaged the Police's relationship with students.

Solution

The Police should engage with students and their representatives when making the decisions around policing student activities and events. A senior Metropolitan Police official should have responsibility for improving the Police's relationship with London's students.

Demand

'We want an extensive review of the Government's *Prevent* Strategy to be called.'

Problem

The measures in the *Prevent* Strategy to tackle terrorism and extremism in Universities and Colleges are unhelpful, inflammatory and discriminatory.

Solution

A wide-scale review of the *Prevent* strategy should be called, that will radically alter how countering terrorism and extremism in Universities and Colleges is approached with more effective results.

Demand

'We want a city-wide police strategy for crime prevention and student safety.'

Problem

Criminals perceive students as easy targets with student loans and in possession of the latest technology. Students have a wide range of backgrounds and are often subjects of abuse. Many students are also new to London and the UK and are unused to securing their property.

Solution

Creation and implementation of a comprehensive strategy drawn up after consultation with Students' Unions effectively tackling crimes affecting students.

Transport

Demand

'We want 1/3rd discount on pay as you go and all travel cards for students traveling in London.'

Problem

Travel costs can be a huge expense for students. Weekly, monthly, and annual travel cards are not cost effective and do not reflect students' timetables or frequency of journeys.

Solution

Discounting pay as you go travel will fairly alleviate the costs of studying in London for all students.

Demand

'We want improved cycling provision for students.'

Problem

The cycle hire scheme is limited to particular areas in central London. There are few provisions outside Zone 1, especially in South London. There is a lack of cycle racks and the cycle hire scheme in areas with high numbers of students.

Solution

Put cycle hire scheme racks and lanes in densely populated student areas and extend it out further.

Housing and Living

Demand:

'We want the London Assembly to investigate the poor conditions of student housing'

Problem:

A whole list of issues including the lack of consistency in standards, rising costs, the hazards of discrimination, extortion on deposits, and restrictions on who can be a guarantor for international students.

Solution:

An investigation with a view to potentially create a charter between students and landlords.

Demand:

'We want a maintenance allowance that accurately reflects the costs of being a student in London.'

Problem:

The maintenance allowance puts students living in London approximately £500 over the national poverty line. The cost of living in London and away from home in comparison with the rest of the country is high.

Solution:

Lobby Student Finance to review and increase maintenance loans to better reflect living costs.

Employment

Demand:

'We want internship opportunities to be paid.'

Problem:

Employers can get away with not paying interns because the law is not adequately enforced.

Solution:

As a reward for employers who pay internships a fair wage the Mayor should create an accreditation list. An opposing list should be created for those who don't pay interns fairly.

Demand:

'We want public opposition to damaging restrictions imposed on international students' visas.'

Problem:

The Home Office's new rules on international students' visas are too strict and unreasonable. Applications are handled badly by the UK Borders Agency and processed at an inefficient rate. This management is discouraging international students' applications to our institutions and is harming London's competitiveness as a centre for higher education. As consumers, international students contribute massively to London's wider economy. Their presence in our Colleges and Universities make them diverse and worldwide communities where friendships and networks can be created in a globalised world.

Solution:

The harsh restrictions should be opposed and publicly denounced as detrimental to London's economy and not in the interests of our competitiveness as part of a globalised economy.

Council
13th February 2012