

The Union's Submission of Evidence to the Residential Experience Review

Background

The College announced the Residential Experience Review at the beginning of this academic year with the aim of shaping the residential experience for Imperial students. It will also set out an action plan for the Review Panel's recommendations.

The Union was asked to put together a submission of evidence for the review – we split our evidence up into three broad sections: 'Undergraduate Halls', 'Postgraduate Halls' and 'Beyond Halls'. Due to the incredibly short time frame, we decided to take to Executive Committee a skeleton draft of the paper with some points for discussion. Executive Committee approved the scope of the submission and mandated the Deputy President (Welfare) to write the report. Attached is the full document.

As we point out in the document, the timeframe has meant we've been unable to conduct proper student consultation – because of this, we make recommendations based on survey data and suggestions for areas of investigation. There is a summary of the recommendations we make the panel (p54-55) and I've listed some important points from the document below, bear in mind these are intended as suggestions for the Panel to consider:

Undergraduate Halls

- Pastoral support is an important asset of halls and the wardening team are well-received by students
- Cleaning provision should be reviewed, taking into account the different student to kitchen ratios
- Ensuring students are able to mix and attend inclusive events is important for forming friendships
- We suggest Halls could take on a CSP structure, with Committees being elected through an AGM held in the October rep elections
- Halls Committees should have ultimate control over the amenity fund as this is student money
- The accommodation portfolio should be reviewed - rents at Imperial are expensive and rely on Evelyn Gardens to keep low cost accommodation in the portfolio mix. There are concerns about the future of the portfolio. Also, compared to UCL, we appear to over-represent higher cost rooms.
- The room allocation process can leave students assigned to halls they cannot afford, this should be communicated and the system reviewed
- The Panel should investigate if students should be able to have 51 week contracts if (particularly international) students need to stay over the summer to avoid high commercial rates over the summer period

Postgraduate Halls

- Postgraduates have different needs from halls than undergraduates so research should be conducted as to their specific needs for pastoral support and community building
- GradPad commute lengths to campus are misrepresented on the GradPad website

Council

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- GradPad rents are extremely high and often unaffordable for PhD students living on a stipend.
- Students without a UK-based guarantor have to pay all 51 weeks of GradPad rent up front

Beyond Halls

- We recommend that the College investigates landlord accreditation for the Imperial Home Solutions database – either only advertising accredited landlords or displaying whether or not landlords are accredited
- We also recommend that the College investigate its relationships with letting agents to ensure sponsorship deals do not conflict with students' best interests
- The report contains a proposal for a potential rent guarantor scheme which would allow the College to act as guarantor for any student lacking a UK-based guarantor
- Students can face many different issues living in private accommodation and it's important they receive proper support

Resolves

- To accept the document.