

Sabbatical Housing and Salary Amendments

Proposer:
Alex Savell – Deputy President
(Finance & Services)

Seconder(s):
Tom Wheeler - President

Contributors:
Joe Cooper – Managing Director

Policies affected/related: Sabbatical Accommodation Policy

Policies superseded:

1. Background:

- 1.1. Historically, the Sabbaticals have been incentivised to live in halls
- 1.2. The current policy sees those Sabbaticals that request to 'live out' receive 75% of the average rental price of rooms in student halls for other Sabbaticals
- 1.3. This is then taxed, meaning that living in halls is approximately £300p.c.m cheaper than living out. Or to put it another way the net effect of living out is to receive almost exactly 50% less in rental allowance.
- 1.4. The argument behind this is that living in halls gives a representational benefit and can be considered part of a Sabbatical Officer's job
 - 1.4.1. This cost should therefore be covered and is not considered taxable
- 1.5. Two current Officer Trustees (who are living out) have raised concerns with this system
- 1.6. This paper would only take effect in the 2016-17 academic session – as it would be unfair on those that ran for sabbatical positions this year to significantly alter such a policy after they have been elected
- 1.7. We note that several officer trustees could be in a position to stand again for that academic year and wish to be transparent about this potential conflict of interest

2. Discussion:

- 2.1. Over the years our student makeup has changed
 - 2.1.1. There is a shift toward longer courses (4 year MSci rather than 3 year BSc)
 - 2.1.2. Increasing proportion of PGT students and a higher emphasis on PGRs
- 2.2. As such there has been an increase in the average age of our students
- 2.3. Is the representational benefit of living in halls and being in direct contact with first year students really representative of the spread of student opinion we have anymore?
- 2.4. It could also be claimed that older students are less likely to wish to live in an environment where their closest neighbours are significantly younger than them
- 2.5. Those that have well established social networks will often wish to live with students in private accommodation
- 2.6. As the student population gets older a more significant number may live with partners, spouses or dependents and would therefore be financially punished for this commitment
- 2.7. It can be argued, therefore that this policy has inherent biases towards younger (usually UG), unmarried or single students with no children
- 2.8. Additionally, is there an expectation of Sabbaticals actively engaging with students in halls?
 - 2.8.1. The Felix editor does not have a representational role
 - 2.8.2. About 80% of medical students are in 2nd year or above and there is no guarantee that the Medic President will live in the vicinity of a reasonable sample of medics in halls
 - 2.8.3. Sabbatical contracts make no mention of this aspect of their job
 - 2.8.4. Is it fair to have an expectation of Sabbatical officers during 'social' time
 - 2.8.5. If we believe that it is, does this introduce a bias towards gregarious or outgoing sabbaticals – which is not a representative sample of all our students

- 2.8.6. Can any Sabbatical that is not in halls or who is but prefers not to mix significantly with 1st year students failing to do their job?
- 2.9. It is worth noting, that if arguments that this is an expected part of Sabbaticals roles are no longer accepted then this provision should be considered a taxable benefit in kind and not addressing this could leave the union (or the Sabbatical Officers) liable

3. Proposal

- 3.1. We suggest the following amendments to the Sabbatical Accommodation Policy and the rates of Sabbatical Salaries to come into force for new Sabbaticals during handover 2016 and to take full effect on all future Sabbaticals as of August 1 2016
 - 3.1.1. Sabbatical pay will be adjusted to incorporate the living out allowance
 - 3.1.2. Appointments and Remuneration will reflect this in the choice of Salary point
 - 3.1.3. The Union shall no longer pay for accommodation within halls, but shall continue to act as an intermediary with college if students should elect to live in halls at the start of the year
 - 3.1.4. The Union will ensure that this can be paid for in a manner that reflects the monthly nature of Sabbatical salaries
- 3.2. This would be an effective pay cut for Sabbaticals that live in halls (due to taxation), as such the Union should consider methods to mitigate this