

UROP Focus Group

Introduction

Undergraduate Research Opportunity Projects (UROPs) are Imperial College's research programmes for UG students that internal and external students can do over the summer. The College is currently looking at how to improve the UROP scheme and have suggested some recommendation points. I have set up a focus group with some students that have previously done a UROP to discuss their experience and their thoughts regarding the suggested recommendations. The recommendations and thoughts of the focus group are summarised below.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 Where departments can't provide sufficient funding, the College needs to allocate that department more funding.

The Medicine department have 5 bursaries of £150 per week each, which compared to the fundings of Natural Sciences and Engineering is much smaller.

Recommendation 2 The funding and the allocation of funding need to be more transparent.

The various sources of funding need to be explained better and more concise and the allocation of fundings isn't clear enough. This needs to be a combined effort between departments, faculties and registry.

Recommendation 3 UROP supervisors need to be trained and better equipped on how to introduce the students to the UROP.

Some students felt there that the UROP supervisor didn't quite know how to start the UROP with the student or tell other researchers that there was a student doing an UROP.

Recommendation 4 The Union and the College need to organise Summer events for UROP and other students to socialise.

Many UROP students didn't know if there were other UROP students and therefore felt isolated.

Recommendation 5 Departments and College need to regularly collect feedback from students after their placements.

Students don't have the opportunities to provide any official feedback of their project.

Recommendation 6 In departments where there isn't a placement coordinator or similar, Senior Tutors need to be an UROP champion.

The students agreed that a staff member who is fully aware of UROPs would be helpful.

Recommendation 7 Where possible UROP placements need to be included on the UROP website.

Many UROPs aren't advertised on the website and students would benefit of having a choice when applying for UROPs.

Recommendation 8 1st year students need to be offered rooms in student halls at term rent price.

1st year students who are doing an UROP have difficulties finding accommodation inbetween moving out of halls and starting the UROP. Currently they can live in halls, but the prices are much higher over summer.

Recommendation 9 The UROP scheme needs to be advertised at the start of the year, especially to first year students.

The UROP scheme isn't advertised as an opportunity to students and they usually find out later at careers fairs or when talking to their tutors.