

Higher Education Funding Preferendum/Survey Mandate

Proposer:
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Seconders(s):
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1. The Union Notes:

- 1.1. At Council last year a paper was presented regarding the fact that our policy on Higher Education Funding was due to expire. It was noted that with Higher Education Funding quite likely to be an issue at the upcoming general election it is an important time for us to have a stance on the issue
- 1.2. Our previous policy on this was in support of tuition fees and can be found at <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/policies/20>
- 1.3. Three potential funding models for home/EU undergraduate fees were presented to council (free education, tuition fees and graduate tax)
- 1.4. However, council voted to defer this decision as they felt unable to say with confidence that their decision would reflect the views of the full student population and therefore mandated the sabbatical team to carry out a 'Preferendum'
- 1.5. The minutes for this should be being approved at this meeting and the paper can be found at: https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/13-14/Union_Council/file/2537

2. The Union Believes:

- 2.1. The new sabbatical team believe strongly that a Preferendum is not the best way to canvas student opinion in this case.
- 2.2. However, we are committed to following the spirit of the mandate laid down by council last year.
- 2.3. As such we would like the council of 2014 to modify the current mandate to allow for a survey rather than a Preferendum to take place.
- 2.4. There are several reasons why we believe this is a better option:
 - 2.4.1. A simple Preferendum only gives limited information, while it tells us which funding model students prefer it doesn't give any information on the reasons why students feel this way or give us a strong platform to respond to changes or new proposals.
 - 2.4.2. A Preferendum only has a strong mandate if you get a high turnout, which seems unlikely in this case, while a survey canvasses opinion with a much lower risk of a weak resulting lobbying platform
 - 2.4.3. We believe that a survey will help encourage engagement and real thought about the issue. We hope that will gain a more accurate reflection of student views than a single question.
- 2.5. We have begun a draft survey using the college's survey platform, Qualtrics. This has allowed us to explore a couple of alternative structures for the survey. At present, we are aiming for a short survey that probes 3 or 4 issues related to Higher Education Funding before asking both what people's preferred funding model is in an ideal world and in the more realistic case of

what platform we should lobby from in the present situation. However, we feel that Council should be able to be involved in the finalisation of this.

- 2.6. We also have a proposed timescale for the project. Which can be seen in Appendix A. This is quite a tight schedule in places and is the reason this debate is first coming to this Council rather than waiting for all the ordinary members to have been elected. However we feel it is important to have a policy in place before January as this will be the start of campaigning and prime time to hold candidates to account for their views on an issue that is of prime importance to the Union

3. The Union Resolves:

- 3.1. To modify Council's previous resolution to allow for a survey to canvas student opinion on higher education rather than a Referendum
- 3.2. To mandate the DPFS and DPE to work with any interested members of council or other students to enact the survey and produce the policy working towards the proposed timescale in Appendix A

Appendices

A. Proposed Timescale

A.1. Below is the proposed timeframe in reverse chronological order:

Date:	Event:	Objective:
December 19 th 2014	End of Autumn Term	To have a lobbying strategy in place for 2015
December 9 th 2014	Union Council 4	Discussion of the final Higher Education Funding Policy
December 2 nd 2014	Council 4 paper deadline	Higher Education Funding Policy submitted to Council
November 28 th 2014		Full analysis of survey data complete
November 21 st 2014		Survey to have concluded by this date at the latest
November 11 th 2014	Union Council 3	
October 29 th 2014		Survey window opens. Survey to be open for 2 weeks
October 28 th 2014	Union Council 2	Final Survey amendments to be complete, Council discussion of finalised survey
October 21 st 2014	Council 2 paper deadline	Submission of finalised survey
October 13 th 2014	Union Council 1*	Council discussion of survey rather than referendum, working group formation
October 6 th 2014	Council 1 paper deadline	Paper submitted to Union Council