

College Secretary & Registrar's Office
Imperial College London

Room 4.05, Level 4, Faculty Building
South Kensington Campus
London SW7 2AZ, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7594 7272
Mob: +44 (0)7714 051206
Fax: +44 (0)20 7594 8802

j.neilson@imperial.ac.uk
www.imperial.ac.uk

John Neilson
College Secretary & Registrar

Mr Paul Beaumont
Chair
Union Council

3 December 2014

Dear Paul,

Following the discussion at the Union's last Council meeting, it was suggested that I should write to you so that your Council members could hear direct from the College why the recent decisions about bursaries for Home students starting in 2016 – 17 onwards will, in the College's view, make the substantial sum available for such bursaries (c. £7.7m) as useful to students as possible.

Over the summer, the previous team of Union sabbatical officers had prepared a thoughtful paper suggesting that students who come from households with incomes just higher than the lowest income bandings (particularly those with household incomes of above £32,000) were facing the hardest time financially at Imperial as the total financial support available to these students did not meet the estimated cost of living at Imperial. This paper (attached for information) prompted the College to undertake more analysis of the total support available to students in each income band (comprising Government maintenance loans and grants plus the College bursary) in comparison to the estimated cost of living in 2016-17 (£11,522 for a 39-week year) for a number of scenarios for awarding bursaries.

For a scenario where the bursary package for 2016-17 entrants was kept the same as for 2015-16 entrants, the comparison is shown in Chart 1 below.

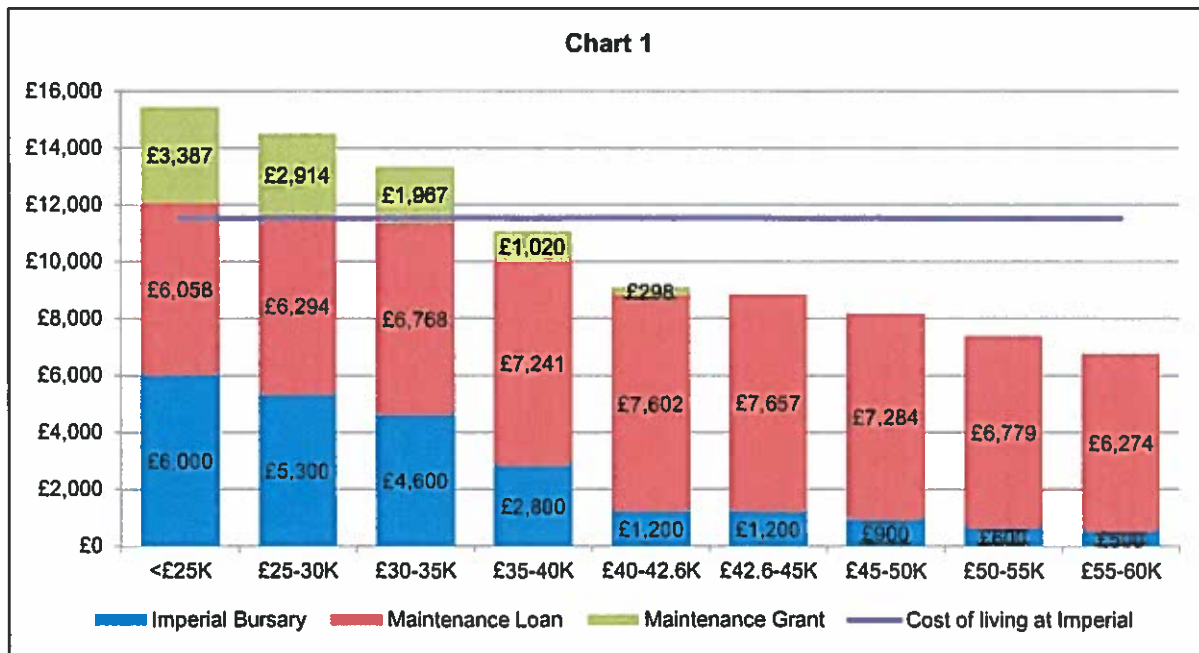
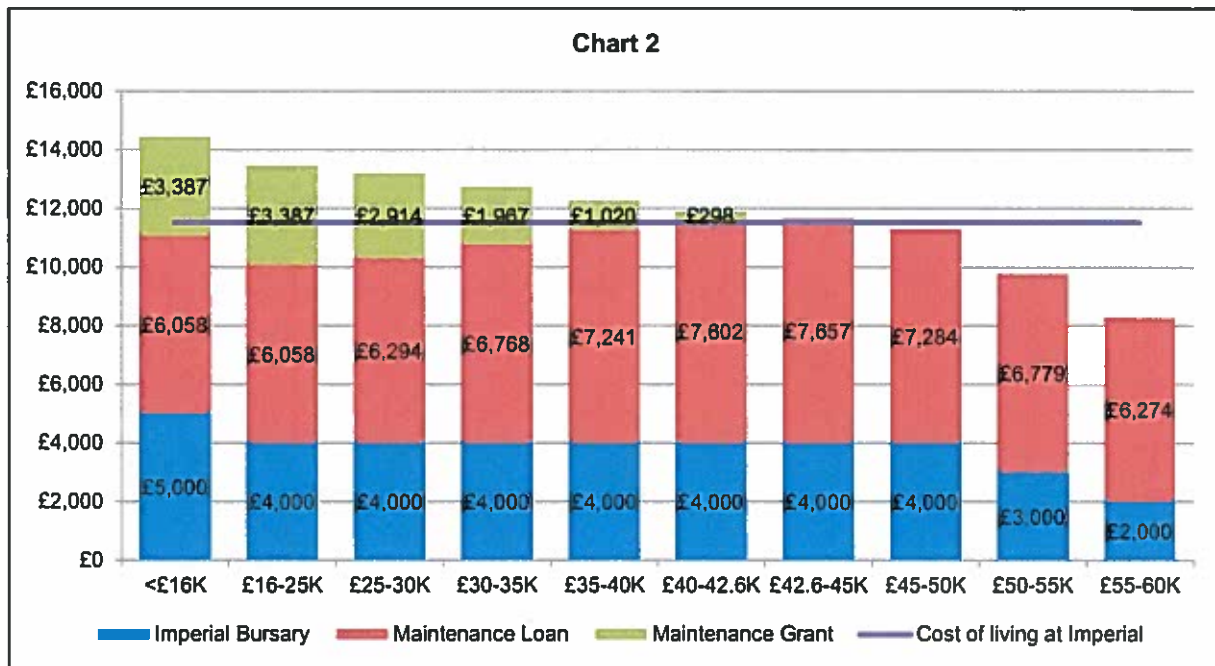


Chart 1 shows a gap between the total support received and the estimated cost of living for those in the slightly higher income bands. About a third of Home students have household incomes below £60,000.

Once the College had prepared a number of bursary scenarios, we started consultation with staff, and I spoke to Tom Wheeler, the Union President, on 8 October. Following the discussions at the Access Agreement & Financial Support Working Group the following week, which Tom Wheeler attended, there was very constructive liaison so that the Union could gain views from students. Helpfully input included 320 responses to an ICU bursary proposals survey. Interestingly, these supported the views of the summer Union paper by showing that those in slightly higher income bands were more likely to say that the adequacy of the funding they received was bad or very bad. For example, of those with household incomes between £40k and £60k, the range of those who find their total funding bad or very bad is in the range 20% to 51%, whereas for those with household incomes below £40k the range is 8% to 14%.

The Provost's Board considered carefully the paper which Tom Wheeler put forward on behalf of the Union on 29 October. There was agreement with a wide range of the points in his paper, for example the separation of the lowest household income bracket into two, the need for better publicity of bursaries, that bursaries should be paid in cash, and that the SLC assessment system should be refined.

The Provost's Board concluded that the bursary package for new undergraduates entering in 2016-17 should be as shown in Chart 2 below.



Under this bursary package, all students with household incomes of less than £45,000 will receive total support which exceeds the estimated cost of living at Imperial. Students with household incomes of less than £16,000 will receive almost £3,000 more than the estimated cost of living at Imperial. In addition to this, students also have access to the College's student hardship funds if they need further support.

It is our genuine view that this is the most effective use of the substantial sum the College invests in its bursary package. We hope that the background above will help the Union Council to understand better the process which led us to our conclusion, which from the summer onwards has included significant engagement with students, whose views widely supported the approach agreed by the College. It is always possible to take longer to reach decisions, but we wished to meet the deadline for publishing information in the 2016 prospectus so that students joining Imperial then will be able to benefit from the new package.

If it would be helpful, I would be happy to attend a Council meeting if you would like to discuss this further.

This package represents substantially the most generous bursary provision of any of the leading UK universities. It demonstrates the College's strong commitment that every Home student should be able to come and study at Imperial, irrespective of their financial circumstances.

With best wishes

Yours


John Neilson
 College Secretary & Registrar

Affordable Imperial?
Paper written by Imperial College Union

Imperial College Union have been looking at the cost of living for Undergraduate students during their time at Imperial. This was prompted by several things: the rise in average rent in halls, the decline in Imperial bursary support, and plenty of anecdotal evidence of students really struggling to afford to come to Imperial.

Income

There are two main forms of financial support for students, from the Imperial bursary scheme and the government's Student Loans Company.

1. Imperial bursary

Taking figures from the 2015/2016 Access Agreement, the Imperial bursary figures come to:

Household Income (£)	Bursary (£)
Up to 25k	6,000
Up to 32k	4,600
Up to 42k	1,200

2. Government support

Government support comes from the tuition fee loan, maintenance loan and maintenance grant (if your household income is below 43k). Tuition fees have been excluded from these calculations as it isn't an up-front cost of studying and is covered entirely by the tuition fee loan. It is worth noting that government support is an approximation as the support package for 2015/16 intake hasn't been announced yet, but plugging the above bursary brackets into the government's student support calculator gives the following estimates of maintenance support:

Household Income (£)	Maintenance support (£)
Up to 25k	9,445
Up to 32k	8,782
Up to 42k	7,835
43k and over	7,739

3. Totals

This provides the overall support package a student receives as follows:

Household Income (£)	Total support (£)
Up to 25k	15,445
Up to 32k	13,382
Up to 42k	9,035
43k and over	7,739

Expenditure

Both the NUS and Imperial College London have worked to estimate living costs in London for the average student, they use the following categories:

1. Accommodation

The average price of accommodation for students in 2015/16 is £165 a week. This is due to the changes in the accommodation portfolio occurring from this year's intake which has

driven up the costs of living in halls in first year. For the purposes of this calculator, we have used this average rent for everyone.

£165/week for 39 weeks (standard length of the accommodation contract) = £6,435

We have not included the cost of accommodation over the summer holidays in this calculator although we recognise living at home, rent-free isn't possible for all students over the summer break.

2. Course Costs

Imperial College's prospectus for 2015 estimates this as £390 for the average student per year, so this is the figure we have used.

3. Food and utilities

Imperial College's prospectus for 2015 estimates this as £2145 for the average student for the academic year.

NUS estimates this cost for a student living in London at £2337 per year.

As it wasn't clear how these estimates had been arrived at, we have taken the average of the two to use in this calculator: £2241

4. Travel costs

Imperial College's prospectus for 2015 estimates this as £888 for a 39 week student oyster card for Zones 1-3. This is what we have used in the calculator.

5. Personal

Although slightly ambiguous as to what 'personal' costs are, Imperial College lists this as an estimate of expenditure of a student in the 2015 prospectus, so we have included this in the calculator. The figure they used was £1950 for the academic year.

6. Total

This leaves the average expenditure of a student at **£11,904**.

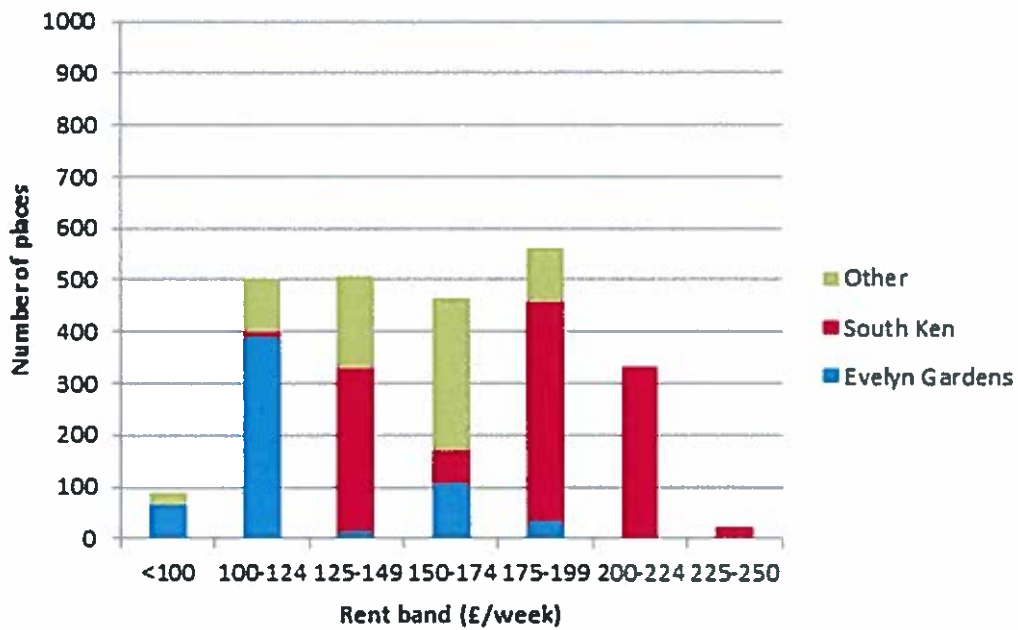
The whole picture

Taking the support package and the estimated expenditure paints the following picture of the affordability of Imperial.

Household income	Expected support	Expected expenditure	Surplus/deficit	Can you afford Imperial?
Up to 25k	15,445	11,904	+3,541	YES
Up to 32k	13,382	11,904	+1478	YES
Up to 42k	9,035	11,904	-2869	NO
43k and over	7,739	11,904	-4165	NO

Appendix A- Changes in Accommodation Portfolio

Rent Portfolio (2013/14)



Rent Portfolio (2015/16)

