

Imperial College Union's Stance on GradPad

Previously passed by Council 30 May 2013

**Proposed by the Deputy President (Welfare)
Seconded by the President**

Background

GradPad is the provider of the Postgraduate only halls of Imperial College London. In the 2011/12 academic year it was decided that Claypods would close down, this was a Postgraduate only hall but not part of GradPad. Claypods was far cheaper than GradPad and the students consulted very much wanted to preserve Claypods as the College's postgraduate accommodation.

Students that had opted to live in Claypods before hearing of its closure were offered accommodation in GradPad with the addition of a bursary to help ease the financial pressure of accepting a more expensive accommodation option. This bursary has been available for the academic year 2012-2013. Management Board decided that this scholarship will not be available for the year 2013-2014, forcing students who could not afford GradPad's extraordinarily high rents to leave. Students were told that there are other forms of financial support available to them, but on further inspection it emerged that these forms of support are only available to students that have not yet started their PhD. It is worth noting that the basic PhD stipend is less than a year's rent at GradPad, who only offer 51 week contracts and insist that international students pay all 51 weeks of rent up front.

Beliefs

Postgraduates can be as vulnerable as first year Undergraduate students. Entering the private accommodation sector regardless of age if students have never studied in London or the UK is challenging. PRES survey data indicates loneliness as a huge issue faced by Postgraduates amongst many others. There is no such thing as a typical 'Imperial Postgraduate student'. The Postgraduate accommodation strategy should take into account the welfare of Postgraduate students.

Asking an international student to pay 51 weeks rent in advance is unfair; Imperial College does not ask this of international students in Undergraduate halls. The relationship between GradPad and Imperial College appears to be a complex one which warrants more investigation, however Imperial College should not be supporting external providers that don't treat students in the same manner as the College do with their halls.

Paying in termly instalments puts an unfair financial burden on Postgraduates who receive a minimum stipend in monthly instalments.

Any financial assistance available to students to help them afford the rent in GradPad should be available to all students, regardless of whether they have already started their PhD.

Resolves

To lobby College to:

1. Develop a Postgraduate Accommodation Strategy that incorporates the welfare needs faced by Postgraduate students, and provides a range of financially viable options.
2. Ensure that any financial assistance that is in place is available to all students, regardless of where they are in their studies.
3. Provide information on private accommodation alternatives to Grad Pad.
4. Allow international students to pay their rent in instalments.