

Ethos Squash Court Pricing

Proposed by: Ben Slater

Seconded by: Andrew Russell

Union Notes

Imperial College Ethos owns three squash courts, one is used for weight training and two are bookable as squash courts. During term time, the squash courts are block booked by sport clubs for a total of 29 hours per court per week (**Table 1**). Outside of the block booked hours, the squash courts may be used for individual bookings which are booked through the Ethos online booking system. The two points below summarise some additional relevant information.

1. Although recently re-painted, the red service line was previously not visible for over a year on both courts. Additionally, there are irregular gaps in the wooden floorboards and gaps between the wall and flooring.
2. Students are not permitted to bring a guest from outside of Imperial College to play (unlike local institution's 'pay and play' policies).

Table 1: Block booked courts throughout term time (each term is the same as autumn)

AUTUMN								BOOKING	NOTES
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday		
07:00:00								UNAVAILABLE	
07:30:00								EXTERNALS	Schools/Commercial
08:00:00								ACC SQUASH	
08:30:00								ACTIVE IMPERIAL	
09:00:00								ICSM SQUASH	
09:30:00								KARATE SHOTOKAN	
10:00:00						KARATE SHOTOKAN 10AM-12PM			
10:30:00									
11:00:00									
11:30:00									
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16:00:00									
16:30:00									
17:00:00									
17:30:00									
18:00:00	ACC SQUASH 4-10PM		ACC SQUASH - 1-10PM			ACC SQUASH 5-8PM	ACC SQUASH 3-8PM		
18:30:00				ACTIVE IMPERIAL SQUASH 6-7:30PM					
19:00:00		ACTIVE IMPERIAL SQUASH 7-8:30PM							
19:30:00									
20:00:00									
20:30:00		ICSM SQUASH 8:30-10PM		ACC SQUASH 7:30-10PM					
21:00:00									
21:30:00									
22:00:00									
22:30:00									

Ben Slater previously contacted the 2017-2018 Deputy President (Clubs and Societies), however this was passed on to Iain Pullar (student activities Manager). Iain Pullar organised a meeting with myself and Hannah Blandford from Ethos to try and negotiate a better pricing strategy which reflects the demand of the squash courts and brings the pricing in line with other university squash court prices. Unfortunately Ethos are not willing to change their pricing at all. During this meeting Hannah referenced that Ethos's membership fees are some of the lowest in the country (compared with other universities) and this should be taken into account when looking at the squash court pricing.

Table 2: The Ethos court booking fees for individual bookings and club bookings are detailed in the table below

Booking method	Cost
Club block booking	£3.25 (unsure whether per hour or per 45 minutes)
Student individual booking	£9 per 45 minutes
Staff individual booking	£11 per 45 minutes

Table 2 shows Imperial College’s squash court pricing. When compared with other universities such as Brunel (**Table 3**), this pricing is much higher and does not offer off peak discounts.

Table 3: The pricing for Brunel University London

Status	Off peak cost (40 minutes)	Peak cost (40 minutes)
Staff	£3.00	£5.50
Student	£2.50	£4.50

After contacting the Imperial Freedom of Information Office, it was revealed that the revenue generated from individual bookings for the financial year to July 2018 was £13550 whilst the revenue generated from club hire was £5,975. As the Freedom of Information request did not reveal whether the individual bookings were made by students or staff, this calculation assumes all courts were booked at the cheaper student price of £9 per 45 minutes which gives the maximum average daily bookings and in reality this will be lower as some bookings will be made by staff. Additionally, 5 closure days were assumed. Therefore, each court is booked for an average of 1.57 hours per day which amounts to just two bookings per court each day.

Additionally, the Imperial College Medics Squash Club play at the Charing Cross Sports Club in Fulham and charge each member £18 for the year plus £2 per booking. Therefore, Charing Cross sports Club are able to offer a cheaper package than Ethos.

Union Believes

1. The Ethos squash prices are too expensive for a university establishment and are not comparable with other university pricing schemes such as Brunel, they are not even comparable with other local establishments such as the Charing Cross Sports Club. This makes regular play for students unaffordable
2. The squash courts are heavily underused. This is evident from the Freedom of Information request which shows how many hours each court is booked for each day.
3. Ethos offers a very cheap student gym membership. However, it does not seem fair to use this as an excuse to charge a higher rate for squash court bookings. This means that effectively, the squash court hire subsidises the ‘free’ gym.
4. Imperial College’s own sports facility, Ethos should be able to offer the most competitive pricing for playing squash for students studying at Imperial College.
5. The courts are poorly maintained/poor quality but this is not reflected in the high price.
6. Ethos student members do not have the flexibility to play with players from outside of Imperial College but this is not reflected in the court price.

Union Resolves

1. I believe The Union should consult Ethos on this issue and lobby Ethos to lower their prices to be similarly priced to other universities and not similarly priced to local competitors.
2. Encourage a pricing strategy to reflect the demand at different times of the day by lobbying Ethos to introduce an off peak booking option.
3. Conduct a price comparison between Imperial College and other universities both nationally and in London.*

*Brunel University was the only London University which had their squash court hire prices easily accessible publically, others such as Kings College and UCL could not be easily found.

Freedom of Information request

Dear Mr Slater

Thank you for your recent Freedom of Information request. Please find below the College's response to your questions.

the Ethos squash court booking data for a full year e.g. April 2017-April 2018? I would just like to know at what times each court was booked throughout the year and when the courts were free. If possible please could I know what type of booking the court was e.g. an individual booking or a block booking by a sports club where they block book courts at a certain time each week.

Please find attached a spreadsheet showing the block bookings data for the Ethos squash courts. The block bookings are shown termly, and vacation block bookings are also provided.

Blank white cells on the spreadsheet indicate that these times were available for individual bookings.

To provide the data for individual bookings would require manually looking through Ethos's booking records for each day to see which of the hour-by-hour bookings were for the squash courts. This would take over 18 hours of work and is therefore exempt from disclosure under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 12 states that "Section 1 (1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit (under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004)." The appropriate limit is set at 18 hours.

Please could I also know the revenue generated from the squash courts

The revenue figures for squash court hire shown below are for the most recent College financial year to July 2018:

Club Hire: £ 5,975

Individual Hire: £13,550

Total Revenue: £19,525

Please note that this revenue is that paid directly to Ethos. The College may have other revenue from commercial contracts that include use of the squash courts as part of wider agreements. It is not possible to directly separate out these figures.

...and the maintenance costs for the same year?

The squash courts are maintained and serviced as part of overall maintenance work across Ethos. As such, there are no maintenance costs directly attributable solely to the squash courts.

During summer 2018, there is a refurbishment project planned solely for the squash courts, and it is expected that this will cost c £10,000.

I am obliged, under the Freedom of Information Act, to inform you of our complaints procedures in case you are unhappy about the way in which your request has been dealt with. If you wish to complain about this response, you should contact the College Secretary at the address below.

The College Secretary

Imperial College London

Exhibition Road

London

SW7 2AZ

E-mail: collegesecretary@imperial.ac.uk

If you are unhappy about the way in which the College Secretary handles your complaint then you may have recourse to the official regulator for the Freedom of Information Act who is:

The Information Commissioner

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

<http://www.ico.gov.uk>

Kind regards,

Catherine Harpham