

Union Membership for Students on Interruption of Studies

Proposer: Adam Turner, Recreation Sector Chair

Seconder: Ross Unwin, Deputy President Clubs and Societies

Union notes:

1. Students on an interruption of studies (IoS) are not registered as students at the College¹.
2. Full membership of the Union is the sole right of students registered at the College, and students automatically cease to be a full member of the Union if they cease to be a registered student, such as when starting an interruption of studies².
3. ICU Associate Member policy 1.4 allows for any previous member of the Union to be given lifetime associate membership in exchange for a fee³.
4. There is currently no automatic provision of any form of Union membership for students whose registration has been suspended due to being on an interruption of studies.
5. Students face additional financial pressures when on interruption of studies, as they are no longer eligible for student council tax exemption and do not receive student loans.
6. Students who have been required by the College to defer their enrolment from 2020/21, have been given free associate membership of the Union⁴.
7. The Union President and other Officers Trustee are currently undertaking a review of associate and lifetime associate membership of the Union.
8. The Union President is currently in discussions with College as to how students undertaking an interruption of study can best be supported by the College.
9. The Union can act to change its policy on associate membership unilaterally, but any changes to eligibility for full membership will require changes to the Union's Constitution, which requires agreement from College.

Union Believes:

1. Students on an interruption of studies do not simply cease to be a member of the Imperial community and disappear. They continue to actively participate in College and Union life, including holding positions on CSP committees.
2. The Union's role as a route through which to meet people and socialise becomes more important as students no longer have the opportunity to do this during academic activities such as lectures and tutorials.
3. Students undertaking interruption of studies are more likely to require support from the Union and its Advice Centre when they are required to provide evidence of the reason(s) for an IoS or to prove their fitness to return to study following an IoS.
4. The Union should not, by default, remove students from its community by not automatically providing continuity of membership, nor should there be financial barriers for re-entering Union life for students already experiencing difficulties.

¹ <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-support-zone/advice/my-student-status/>

² ICU Constitution E.2.1.

³ <https://www-d7.imperialcollegeunion.org/dbfile/pbf/54>

⁴ <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/leadership-and-strategy/provost/vice-provost-education/202021-mandated-deferral-support-package/imperial-college-union-associate-membership/>

5. Extending associate membership free of charge to students who have been required by College to defer their entry from 2020/21 sets the tone that students who are members of the Imperial community, but not registered at the College, should be given free associate membership of the Union.
6. This paper represents the bare minimum that should be done to improve the support given to students on interruption of studies, and the work currently underway by Officers Trustee and College should continue.

Union Resolves:

1. Request the Trustee Board to change the ICU Associate Membership policy to include a provision to automatically grant associate membership to any previous student registered at the College who is currently on an interruption of studies. This membership must be free of charge and should continue until such a time as they either return to their studies (and thus regain full membership) or permanently withdraw from the College. Possible wording is included in Appendix A, but this is for informative purposes only.
2. Fully support the review of associate and lifetime associate memberships being undertaken by the Union President and Officer Trustee team.
3. Fully support the continuation of discussions between the College and the Union into the support provided to students on interruption of studies.

Appendix A (Informative): Possible wording

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1. Associate Membership of the Union – as defined in the constitution is reserved for persons under the following conditions:

[...]

- 1.x A previous member of the Union whose registration at the College is temporarily suspended due to an interruption of studies, until such a time when they either return to their studies or permanently withdraw from the College.

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