

Motion to expand the educational access provisions for disabled students

Community and Welfare Board
24 January 2022

Proposer: Awais Seyyad (Disability Officer) **Seconders:** Nathalie Podder (DPW)

Union notes:

1. 7% of the students at Imperial self-identify as disabled (this is likely an underestimate)
2. Disabled students have higher rate of non-continuation (**10.5%**) compared to the College average (**5.2%**).
3. The College is looking to implement strategies that help reduce the disabled rate of non-continuation.
4. The use of TRAs enabled students to meet the requirements of their degrees and graduate. In 2020 6,700 degrees were awarded with final exams occurring remotely.
5. In addition to TRAs, departments were forced to adapt their lab courses so that they could be delivered remotely to satisfy the requirements outlined by different awarding bodies.
6. The Equality Act of 2010 compels education providers to make “reasonable adjustments” to prevent discrimination against disabled students.
7. The College is currently still deciding about how exams will be conducted going forwards.

Union Believes

1. The arrangements made during the pandemic lowered educational barriers and were overall beneficial to many disabled students.
2. The College has already had to create remote and accessible educational alternatives during the pandemic, and these should not be entirely phased out as we transition back into in-person teaching. For example: lab-in-a-box experiments would still be useful alternatives for disabled students going forwards if they were unable to attend an in-person lab due to their disabilities. Having these provisions already in place may also be beneficial to non-disabled students who may have experienced hardship through the term.
3. The College should have a more unified approach on what constitutes a “reasonable adjustment.” All the provisions provided during the pandemic were used to meet degree requirements in 2020 and 2021. There is no logical explanation why these provisions cannot be reserved for select students who would benefit from them most going forwards, especially seeing as a lot of the work has already been done.
4. Having more accessible labs and exams would increase the extent to which disabled students are able to participate within the courses and could help lower the rate of non-continuation.

Union Resolves:

1. Officer Trustees should lobby the College to create more unified policy surrounding what constitutes a “reasonable adjustment” beyond the scope of exams.
2. Officer Trustees should advocate that TRAs and remote lab alternatives should be included under “reasonable adjustments.”
3. Should the College be resistant to implementing these changes, Officer Trustees and the Disability Officer should lobby the College to publish both their justification for why they believe these changes should not be adopted and what changes they are planning on making to lower the disabled rate of non-continuation.

References:

Data taken from the 2018 Access and Participation Plan.