

Mitigating the Effects of the Cost of Living Crisis by Introducing a Free Tickets Scheme for CU Formals, and Cementing this in Union Constitution

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Trinity Stenhouse (RCSU President)
Seconders: Nathalie Podder (Deputy President (Welfare))
Christian Oldfield (ICSMU President)
Kia Popat (CGCU President)
Josephine Onerhime (RSM President)
Jordan Elliott (ICU Working Class Officer)
Christian Cooper (Sports Sector Chair)
Julia Purrinos de Oliveira (RCSU Vice President (Activities))
Runtian Wu (RCSU Vice President (Education))

1 Union Notes

1.1 Students are affected by the Cost-of-Living Crisis

- i The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reports half of students reported financial difficulties and 91% that they were either somewhat or very worried about the rising cost of living. More than three-quarters (77%) of students were concerned that the rising cost of living may affect how well they do in their studies, and nearly three in ten (29%) reported they were choosing to miss non-mandatory lectures or tutorials to save on costs [1].
- ii Student living costs have increased by 14% since the 2021 survey, whilst the maintenance loan increased by 2.3%. There has been no increase in amounts distributed through the Imperial Bursary for pre-2023 cohorts, but a limited portion of bursary recipients have been made eligible for a £500 fast-tracked grant from the Student Support Fund.
- iii The Department of Education spokesperson responded to the ONS survey with ‘Students who are worried about making ends meet should speak to their university about the support they can access. This year universities can boost their hardship funds by drawing on up to £261m we have made available through the Office for Students.’ This implies it is down to universities to provide support for students, as the government has no separate scheme to provide financial support.

1.2 London is an expensive city to live and go out in

- i London has been ranked the 4th most expensive city to live in in the world by global mobility expert, ECA International [2].

1.3 There is an Attainment Gap between students who feel like they belong and those who do not

- i Students' sense of belonging is linked to positive academic outcomes [3] including higher grades, higher student engagement [4], self-confidence [5], and acceptance [6].
- ii In Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, belonging is placed on the third tier, following physiological needs and safety, implying it is important for people to feel that they belong.
- iii King's College London has identified 'Connections' as one of the five factors affecting one's sense of belonging and suggests that students participate in clubs and societies to enhance their sense of belonging and build their network [7].
- iv Times Higher Education suggests 'Creating campus-wide initiatives' to improve student sense of belonging [8].

1.4 CUs have a precedent of subsidising event tickets for their members

- i CU events, in general, have a ticket cost to help the CU afford venue hire, refreshments and entertainments. This nonzero ticket cost is kept as low as possible by the CU making a loss. CU budgets generally admit up to £3,000 loss per event, whereas large events cost upwards of £10,000. This means ticket cost cannot be eliminated for all attendees.

2 Union Believes

2.1 Some students are disproportionately affected by the Cost of Living Crisis

- i Students claiming Imperial Bursaries and/or from the Student Support Fund are deemed in the most financial need by Imperial College, and as such receive additional funds from the College.
- ii These students are therefore unlikely to be able to afford additional leisure activities, such as going with friends, and buying memberships to clubs and societies. This lack of participation in the student experience will make these students feel isolated from the community and decrease their sense of belonging.
- iii Social isolation makes students feel like they do not belong, and this may affect their grades, mental health, and attitude towards their peers.

2.2 CU event participation increases one's sense of belonging to the community

- i CU events are an excellent opportunity for students to interact with their peers across the faculty and help bring the community together.
- ii Not having the opportunity to attend CU events may negatively impact one's sense of belonging.

2.3 It is unfair that some students, due to monetary restraints, are unable to attend CU events

- i ICU aims to promote equality regardless of race, gender, sexuality, religion or one's financial means, therefore financial means should not be a reason students feel isolated from the community or unable to participate in events.
- ii CU events should be accessible to all members of the CU, and thus an exception must be made for those in financial hardship to ensure they have equal opportunity to attend events and are not immediately excluded from events due to ticket prices.

3 Union Resolves

3.1 CUs to provide a portion of free or discounted tickets to major events for financially disadvantaged students

- i CUs to set aside a portion of their budget for the allocation of free or discounted tickets for each major event. Eligibility will be determined by receipt of the Imperial Bursary and/or the Student Support Fund, and any other relevant circumstances which may cause a student to be in financial difficulty without eligibility for these funds.
- ii In calculating the volume of free/discounted tickets, consider CU budget, number of CU members who are in current receipt of the Imperial Bursary and/or Student Support Funds and the CU's ability to make up this loss from other revenues such as sponsorship, and/or alumni donations.
- iii Funding for the free tickets should ideally be made up by additional grants from respective Faculties and/or Alumni Networks, so that students not eligible to receive free tickets do not feel disadvantaged by the CU's funds being put towards funding tickets for this group.

3.2 To encourage CUs and ICU to provide free or discounted tickets to major events for recipients of Bursaries and/or Hardship Funds

- i CUs will include updates on their efforts to provide free/discounted event tickets to financially disadvantaged students in their reports to Union Council.

- ii DPW/DPFS will provide verbal updates on the number of free/discounted tickets distributed for the Summer Ball.

3.3 CU to actively support CUs in facilitating this scheme in accordance with charity laws and other regulations

- i DPW to help CUs create a process to send an email to students in receipt of Imperial Bursaries and/or Hardship Funds or otherwise in need of support, advertising a raffle or form to fill in to be eligible for free tickets, as CU volunteers are not allowed to possess information about individual students.
- ii Systems and DPW to help CUs to design a process to select students via random methods to receive free tickets.
- iii Systems and DPW to help CUs design a process for students to be informed that they have received free tickets alongside a confirmation of their ticket.

References

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