

**Imperial College Union
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Updating the London Allowance**

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Decision(s): To Approve

Union Notes

1. London tops several lists in cost of living globally, with accommodation cost being the main driving factor [1-3].
2. The UK is the only major European country without implementation of any rent controls [4].
3. Currently, according to the Office for National Statistics [5], the average rent price in London is £1,500/month, which is by far the highest in the UK that averages £825/month, and also dramatically higher than the second-highest region that is South-East with an average of £998/month. This means that the average difference in the cost of housing in London compared to the second most expensive region (South-East) is £6,024/year.
4. PhD stipends in the UK are generally based on the wage standards set by the UKRI. Some students receive a higher stipend, which are also usually based on UKRI standards (e.g., UKRI stipend + 10%). The current UKRI standard is £18,622/year for the UK as a whole, and £20,622/year for London [6]. This difference is due to the additional London allowance of £2,000/year. However, the London allowance has not changed in the last 30 years [7].

Union Believes

1. The current UKRI London allowance is too low and needs to be updated to reflect the current economic situation.
2. Postgraduate students in London universities are naturally experiencing the worst financial wellbeing standards among the UK postgraduate student community.
3. In order to match the living standards of the PhD students in London with the UK students as a whole, the London allowance should be increased.
4. The London allowance should, at a minimum, be £5,000/year.
5. The London allowance should increase with inflation.

Union Resolves

1. For the Union President and Deputy President (Welfare), alongside the paper author, to lobby the UKRI to increase the London allowance to £5,000/year.
2. For the Union President and Deputy President (Welfare), alongside the paper author, to lobby the College to support increasing the UKRI London allowance to at least £5,000/year.
3. If the College does not support increasing the UKRI London allowance to at least £5,000/year, then to form a student-driven campaign led by the paper author focussed on the issue of the UKRI London allowance, with the support of the Union President and Deputy President (Welfare).
4. For the Union President to raise the aforementioned concerns regarding the London allowance at College Council.

5. To gather data regarding the financial circumstances of PhD students at Imperial.
6. For the Union President and Deputy President (Welfare), alongside the paper author, to make efforts to form a working group with other London-based universities to lobby the UKRI to increase the UKRI London allowance to at least £5,000/year.

References:

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4. One Firm Worldwide, Mapping Out Rent Controls Across Europe, 2020 [Online]. Available: <https://www.jonesday.com/en/insights/2020/10/mapping-out-rental-controls-across-europe>
5. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/privaterentalmarketsummarystatisticsinengland/april2022tomarch2023> [Online], Accessed 15 December 2023
6. <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/developing-people-and-skills/mrc/mrc-studentships/minimum-amounts-for-studentship-stipends-and-allowances/> [Online], Accessed 15 December 2023
7. https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/phd_stipend_rates_for_the_last_1 [Online], Accessed 15 January 2024