

**Imperial College Union
Union Council / 12 November 2024**

**Imperial College Union's Stance
on Imperial Rent Negotiations**

Author(s): Nico Henry – Deputy President (Welfare)
Camille Boutrolle – Union President

Seconder(s): Emina Hogas – Deputy President (Education)
Christian Cooper – Deputy President (Clubs & Societies)
Stephanie Yeung – Deputy President (Finance & Services)

Decision(s): To approve.

Union Notes

1. Imperial sets the rents for its student halls. Following precedent from the previous reviews of first year rent prices, Imperial has approached the Union President and Deputy President (Welfare) to partake in rent-setting discussions as representatives of the student voice.
2. In previous rent negotiations, in the academic year 2019-20, Imperial and ICU were unable to reach an agreement over a 12% increase¹, which ultimately required the Provost to make a unilateral decision on rent².
3. The university began negotiations in the last week of October and informed that these discussions must conclude by the end of November. This is following a recent 6 month residential review (January-June 2024).
4. The residential review has categorised accommodation into three distinct price tiers:
 - a. 'Affordable': Rents at London Affordable Rent levels (55% of maximum maintenance loan issued by UK government). Average rent: £193pw.
 - b. 'Peer': Rents below London competitors. Average rent: £280pw.
 - c. 'Market': Rents at 10% discount to market rate. Average rent: £400 pw.
5. Imperial's initial proposal for rent changes features an average increase of 30%. The highest increase of 58% will affect 35% of rooms. The split between affordable, peer and market rooms is currently 37.8%, 34.6% and 27.6% respectively. Of the affordable rooms, 71% are twin rooms; only 15% of all single rooms in the portfolio will be affordable.
6. Successful efforts have been made by the Union to decrease the cost of rooms with restricted views and low ceilings by £5 per week relative to non-restricted rooms.
7. Imperial is implementing a phased decarbonisation plan for campus buildings, including residential buildings³ in line with the legal requirement for all universities to reach net zero by 2040.
8. Imperial halls generate income for the university during the summer. This revenue is not ring-fenced for reinvestment into the halls or in managing rent affordability.

¹https://issues.felixonline.co.uk/felix_1740.pdf

²https://issues.felixonline.co.uk/felix_1742.pdf

³Sustainable Imperial: Our journey to a net zero estate by 2040 [<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/about/sustainability/Our-journey-to-a-net-zero-estate-by-2040.pdf>]

9. Imperial halls house hall seniors, sub wardens and wardens, who are responsible for creating a community in halls and fostering an inclusive and safe community for residents. Currently wardens and sub wardens don't pay rent and seniors get a £5 discount per week which is discounted in lump sum in third term.

Union Believes

1. The university should practice full transparency regarding the costs associated with student halls and share detailed financial information in discussions with ICU.
2. Student in receipt of the bursary should be guaranteed one of their top four accommodation choices. This is essential to ensure that financial support aligns with accessible housing options, reinforcing the university's commitment to equal opportunities for all students.
3. Students should not bear the financial burden of the University's carbon net zero initiatives. These refurbishments are long-term investments in the University's infrastructure, and it is unreasonable to pass these costs on to students through elevated rent.
4. Our hall seniors are not currently receiving fair compensation for their time and contributions which should be remedied, with responsibilities and expectations clearly defined and standardized across different accommodations.
5. Hall wardens and sub wardens should pay discounted rent that fairly reflects their contributions while also taking into account the rising costs of living.
6. All profits made from student halls during the summer should be transparently reinvested into student accommodation, directly suppressing student rent increases.
7. Rooms with restricted views, limited natural light, or reduced floor area should be priced accordingly to reflect these inconveniences. Fair pricing should take into account all factors that affect the liveability of student accommodations.

Union Resolves

1. To take the stance that the university should be transparent with the Union about the costs associated with student halls.
2. To take the stance that the university should be transparent with incoming students about the proximity of each hall to campus, the facilities provided, and the number of students sharing amenities like kitchens.
3. To take the stance that the cost of decarbonisation should not be paid for by students through increases to rent.
4. To take the stance that all profits from student hall summer rentals should be reinvested into student accommodation, and subsidising student rents in the event there are surpluses.
5. To take the stance that hall seniors should receive fair compensation for their time and contributions, with responsibilities and expectations clearly defined.

6. To take a stance that hall wardens and subwardens should pay a discounted rent that fairly reflects their contributions while also taking into account the rising costs of living.
7. To take the stance that no Imperial halls should make a profit from student rental income (i.e. students should only be charged the cost to run and maintain the halls).