

Stance on the use of academic sanctions by Imperial College to enforce payment of debts related to non-academic services

Background

'Academic sanction' refer to the prevention of a student from progressing into the next academic year or from graduating. It may also refer to the suspension of a student from a campus or from the use of academic services such as department access, e-mail access or library access. A debt related to a non-academic service may refer to an accommodation fee or a library fine.

Before accepting a place at the College applicants are sent a copy of the Regulations for students <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/registry/proceduresandregulations/regulations#regstud>.

Regulation 2 states:

"Any student whose sessional fees or whose residence charges (including charges made by the Du Cane Housing Association) have not been paid in full will not be allowed to proceed to the next year of the course and will be required to withdraw from the College. If any fees or charges are still unpaid at the time when a student enters for the last examination necessary to qualify for the award of a degree/diploma, the award will not be conferred and no certificate in respect of the award will be issued until the debt has been paid in full"

Regulation 5 of the same document states:

"Student disciplinary offences of a non-academic nature are dealt with under a code of procedure agreed by Imperial College Union and approved by the Governing Body. In the case of serious offences, this may involve the suspension and/or expulsion of the student from the College."

In the last two years, no student has been prevented from graduating or progressing because of outstanding accommodation charges. Suspensions from campus have only been enforced in the last two years when individuals have been considered to present a danger to other students or where they have used facilities such as e-mail to threaten or abuse other students or staff.

Preventing a student from graduating could impede them from being able to secure a job. This would make paying off the debt more difficult.

If an international student is prevented from progressing to the next academic year this would likely result in them being sent back to their country of residence, having not being able to fulfil the conditions of their visa.

Beliefs

1. Students enter into separate contracts for tuition and for accommodation. These should be treated as separate services offered by the College and therefore an academic sanction should not be imposed on students to enforce payment of debts for accommodation.
2. It is reasonable to enforce an academic sanction should tuition fees not be paid.
3. Disciplinary sanctions that restrict student access to the campus or College services should be used when a student poses a danger to themselves or others and should be appropriate for the offence committed e.g. banning a student from the library after being abusive to library staff.
4. The College has a duty of care to its students and should support students in paying off their debt.

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5. Should someone have outstanding library fines it is reasonable to restrict further removal of library material from the library. However this should not impact the student's ability to enter the library and use the rest of the library services.

Resolve

1. Not to support the use of an academic sanction as a method for enforcing debts relating to non-academic services.