

Provision of Union Support to Halls located away from South Kensington

Ben Fernando, UG Rep for the Faculty of Natural Sciences
Seconded by William Jones, Department of Physics

Background: the Author was resident in Xenia as a first year from October 2012 – June 2013 and as a senior from September – November 2013

The Union Notes:

With regard to these halls in particular:

1. Imperial has established undergraduate halls of residence a considerable distance away from South Kensington. Xenia is a 35 minute tube ride away and Paragon, a temporary substitute for Wilson House, was an hour away
2. Students in these halls face commuting costs of up to £1000 per year (Source – tfl.gov.uk) and have a lower participation rate in Clubs and Societies (Source – DPE, April 2013)
3. Senior-Student ratios in Xenia are lower (5 seniors for 150 students, c.f. Fisher Hall about 10 for 152)
4. Travel home from events on campus at night is challenging, with no direct night bus, and can be unsafe – the author has witnessed several violent incidents on night buses whilst returning home including assault and sexually inappropriate behaviour
5. No sabbatical officer has ever chosen to reside in either Xenia or Paragon

With regard to Union support:

1. The Union believes that the presence of senior officers in halls of residence is ‘vital to maintaining the connection between the officers and the student body’ (Source - DPE’s request to live out, 11 June 2013), however no officer has ever lived in Xenia and none are believed to have lived in Paragon last year
2. No Sabbatical has visited Xenia in the last two years (at least not whilst the freshers were in residence) and to the knowledge of the author none visited Paragon either.
3. After the 2012 Mingle the Union provided minibuses to shuttle students between Beit and Xenia
4. Due to communication issues between the wardens and the Union Paragon students were unable to attend the Mingle 2012 as a hall
5. Due to issues with the minibus tests the wardens were not able to take the minibus tests during the leadup to Freshers’ Week 2013. As a result, those who were not already trained could not take on shuttling duty
6. Halls are offered the opportunity to choose the day that they attend the Mingle on a first-come, first-served basis
7. For students in more distant halls, travel back from the Union on a Sunday night is harder than on a Saturday night due to the tubes stopping earlier and the reduced frequency of night buses.
8. The Union has attempts to communicate with hall committees in order to offer support and arrange representation, however this has proved difficult

The Union Believes:

1. That all members of the Union should have equal access to Union Services and Facilities

Council

14 January 2014

2. Where possible, members of the Union who are at a disadvantage with regard to ease of access should be accommodated
3. Some students in these halls say that they feel cut off from the union and campus events, especially during the first few weeks of term

The Union Resolves:

Suggested nominees for each role are in italics

1. To analyse the 2013 (and possibly 2012) student experience surveys in a way that would highlight any issues raised by students in more distant halls that were specific to those halls – *DPW*
2. To look into having Sabbatical officers attend Hall Committee meetings at more distant halls at least termly, in order to liaise with students, advertise events and ensure adequate representation; and to continue to remind wardens that Union support is available if needed – *DPW (to be mentioned at next hall committee meeting)*
3. To provide a small discount on Freshers' Week events like the Mingle and Freshers' Ball for those not in halls or in more distant halls, in order to improve the poor participation of these groups in on-campus social events. This is intended to be a token amount, which would also partially offset the added cost of tube and night bus travel to the event.
4. To make provision in the budget for petrol to transport students back to more distant halls after the Mingle – *DPFS*
5. To look into formalising the elections for the Sexual Health, RAG and Union representatives in halls through the Union Elections system – *DPFS/Returning Officer*