

Union Council Motion: Bursaries and the 2015-16 Student Cohort

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Union Notes

The following about the Imperial Bursary:

How does the Imperial bursary work?

- Financial support is awarded annually to Home undergraduates with household income of up to £60,000. In 2013-14, 36% of Home students received support [1: p.3]
- The sum awarded depends on the income bracket, and varies depending on which bursary scheme the individual is on. There are different bursary schemes for different years of enrolment at Imperial
- Three different schemes are considered here (years refer to year of enrolment): (2012, 2013, 2014), (2015) and (2016, 2017) [2]

How has the bursary changed?

- The bursary changes between (2012, 2013, 2014) and 2015 were essentially negative; no extra funds were provided to any income bracket, while higher income brackets (from £35k to £60k) saw a sharp drop in funding (see *Fig. 1*)
- Analysis by IC and ICU [3] looked at total amount of funding received by students from each income bracket eligible for the IC bursary (loans and grants from SLC, as well as IC bursary). Report also estimated total annual living costs at Imperial (£11,522)
- The report concluded that under the 2015 system, students from lower income brackets (through a combination of higher maintenance loans & grants from SLC, and a higher IC bursary) received more than the annual living costs, while students from higher income brackets who still qualified for the bursary would be receiving substantially (~£2-4k) less than the living costs (see *Fig. 2*)
- Following this, IC decided to change bursary scheme for 2016 intake, giving far more to higher income brackets and slightly less to lower income brackets. These changes are shown in *Fig. 3* and *Fig.4*.

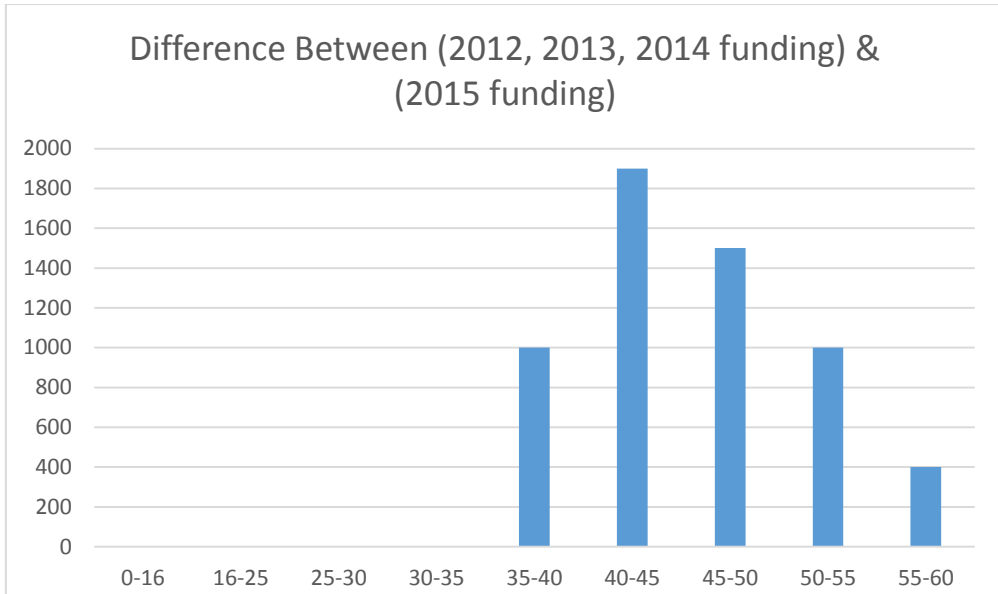


Figure 1: Changes in funding between (2012, 2013, 2014) scheme and 2015 scheme. Higher income brackets received substantially more support pre-2015.

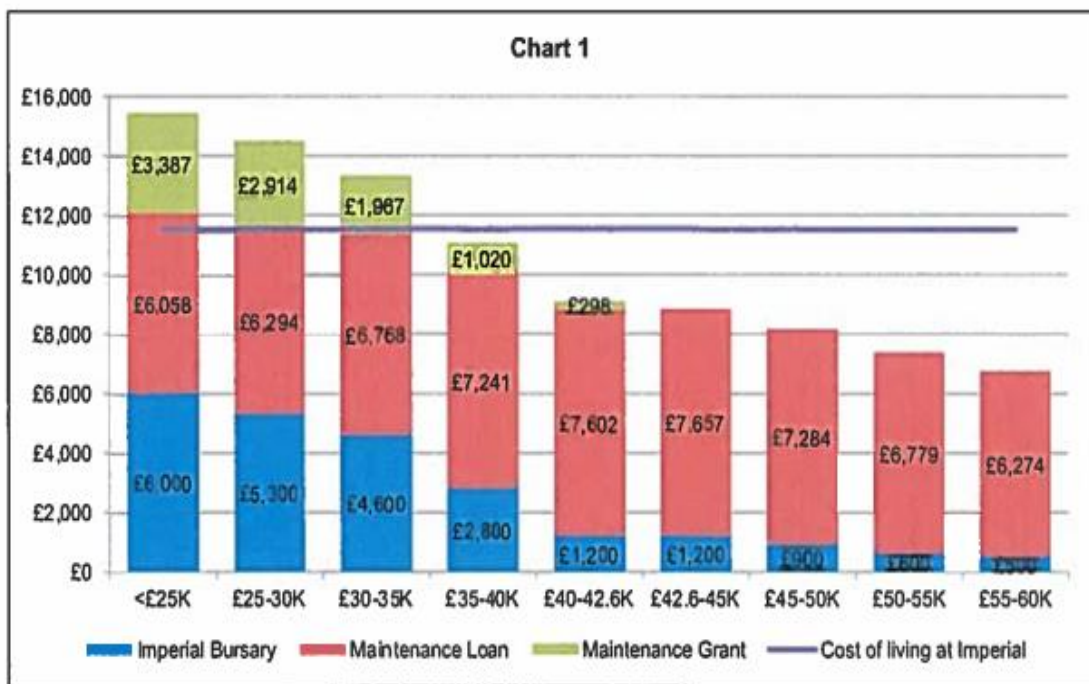


Figure 2: IC's analysis of funding available to students at Imperial, according to the 2015 system. Taken from College response – Bursary funding [3].

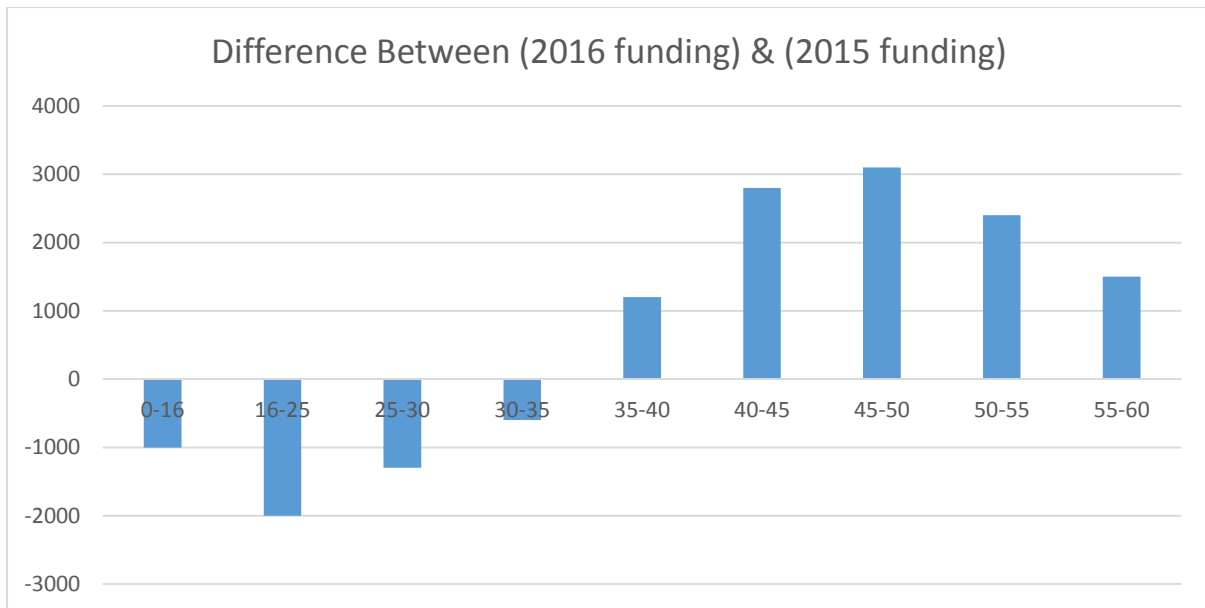


Figure 3: Changes to funding between 2015 scheme and 2016 scheme, made to address concerns discussed in [3]. Under new scheme, students on lowest household incomes receive less funding while students on higher incomes receive more.

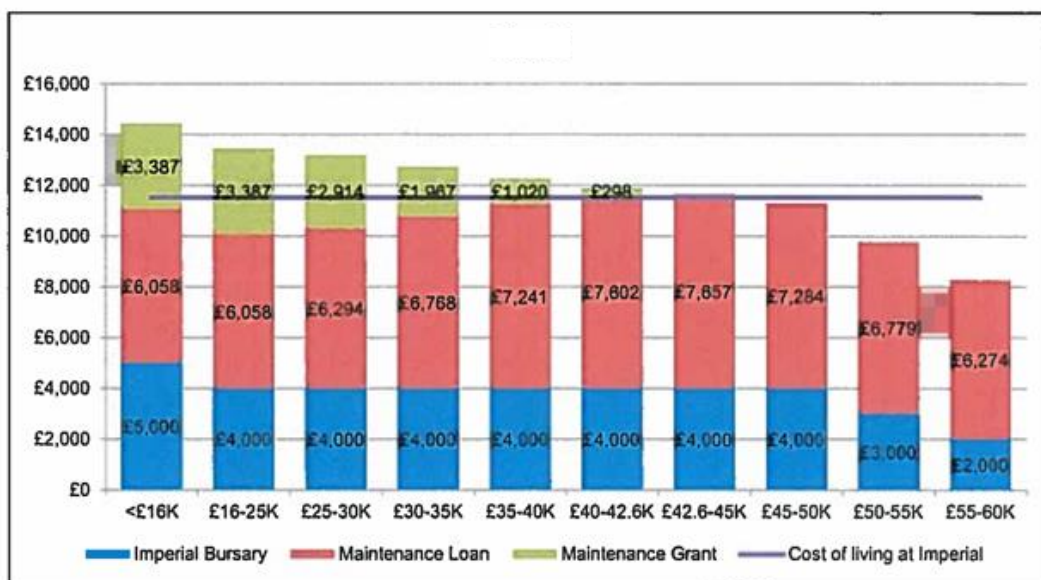


Figure 4: IC's analysis of funding available to students at Imperial, under the 2016 system. Taken from College response – Bursary funding [3].

Consequences

- Students in the 2015-intake with annual household incomes of between £35,000 and £65,000 would have received substantially larger bursaries had they enrolled either a year sooner or a year later (see Fig. 5). *At present, they receive much less than IC's own estimate of living costs in London.* ICU's analysis [3] concludes that students from these income brackets **may not be able to afford to study at Imperial.**

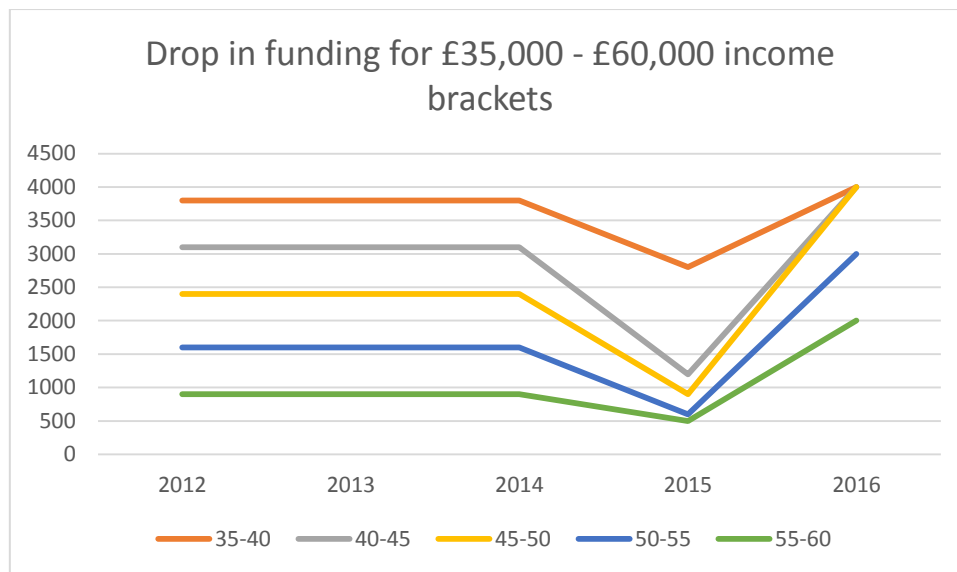


Figure 5: Changes in bursary funding available to students in the £35,000 - £60,000 income brackets. Students in 2015 intake receive significantly less than students of equivalent financial backgrounds in any year above or below. Data taken from [2].

References

[1] Imperial College London. (2016) *Imperial College London Access Agreement 2016-17*. Available from: <https://www.offa.org.uk/agreements/Imperial%201617.pdf>

[2] Imperial College London. (2016) *Imperial Bursary*. Available from: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/ug/fees-and-funding/bursaries-and-scholarships/imperial-bursary/>

[3] Imperial College Union. (2014) *College response – Bursary funding*. Available from: https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/14-15/Union_Council/file/2728

Union Believes

- Very roughly, that this issue affects 200-400 students in total (ballpark)
- That despite being on the higher end of those students eligible for the bursary, these households are not necessarily very well off. It should be noted that a household income of £50,000 corresponds to two workers each earning **less than the average Imperial graduate starting salary**.
- That the steps taken by College to enhance the provision for students from 2016 onwards are commendable.
- That despite this, no similar effort has been made to improve the financial provision for existing students. Students who started here in 2015 are left under a system College themselves acknowledge is inadequate.

Union Resolves

- To investigate more thoroughly the number of students affected by this issue.
- To stress to College that, while efforts they have made to avoid deterring future students are welcome, existing students should not be overlooked.
- To request that **additional funds be made available** for students in the “squeezed middle” £35,000 - £60,000 income brackets who are currently on the 2015-intake bursary scheme – both to reimburse them for the 2016-17 academic year, and to guarantee this funding for the remainder of their degrees.