

Stance for enhancing engagement and support of Hall Seniors

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The Union Notes

1. That Hall Seniors are a distinct group of student volunteers at Imperial College London, tasked with providing a good student experience to all students through running events and as a source of peer support for first year students.
2. That representation of the interests of hall communities has historically been through the Union's Communities and Welfare Board, a subcommittee of the Union Council.
3. At the start of this year the Deputy President (Welfare) signalled that, with the advent of the Wellbeing Representation Network, the CWB would start to phase out Hall representatives and seek another avenue for this element of student voice.
4. Hall Seniors form one half of the Pastoral Teams at Imperial Halls of Residence, the other half of which is the Wardens.
 - a. Wardens - typically PhD students, early-career academic staff at the College or even members of Union staff - receive rent-free accommodation in return for acting responsibly in a welfare capacity to groups of as many as 40 undergraduate students. They receive valuable training, such as Mental Health First Aid (MHFA).
 - b. Seniors – who are typically returning undergraduate students – are responsible for organising pastoral and general events to support the mission of the Pastoral Team to develop a 'hall community' and ensure all students feel welcome. However, beyond a week of free rent at the start of the year, seniors are expected to pay full rent for the rest of their let despite providing a valuable service to the College. Also they receive a single briefing from the Union at the start of the year. Other training is provided by the NHS on items such as diagnosing meningitis and septicaemia, which is external to Union provision.
5. When the new Evelyn Gardens Halls opened in 2016 following refurbishment, a vacancy for a role similar to a Hall Senior or 'Resident's Assistant' was advertised with one of the benefits being discounted rent.
6. Research of other institutions shows that Hall Senior equivalent positions at [Bournemouth](#), [Nottingham Trent](#), and [Edinburgh](#) receive either discounted rent or direct reimbursement through employment, and whilst the role descriptions differ from the Imperial-specific pastoral system, strong parallels exist.
7. Until fairly recently (prior to 2014), Hall Seniors at Imperial College London Halls of Residence received a partial discount on their rent as a benefit of the role.
8. During the Hall Senior application process in 2016/17, College reduced the number of rooms allocated to Seniors and Halls were informed to recruit fewer Senior positions. A reduction of approximately 20 % on previous years was initially proposed but the decision was reversed, which required an additional recruitment stage in the Summer Term.

The Union Believes

1. That Hall Seniors carry out a valuable role in developing the Imperial community and welcoming new students to Imperial, as well as providing the most successful way (as it stands) for developing inter-Faculty, inter-departmental and 'vertical' community.
2. That Hall Seniors are not sufficiently supported by the Union at the moment.
 - a. The training offered to seniors by the Union is limited to a briefing at the start of the year. This year saw the introduction of Active Bystander training, but with budget uncertainties it is unclear whether this scheme will continue.
 - b. Support from Union staff doesn't carry forward throughout the year which could be valuable to enhance the efforts of Pastoral teams.
 - c. Union efforts to support Pastoral teams seem to be focussed on Wardens. Whilst these are important and more long-term members of the team, developing Wardens to the exclusion of Senior provision largely ignores the larger 'half' of the Pastoral team.
3. That Hall Seniors and hall communities have limited representation through which to communicate concerns due to the changes to the Communities and Welfare Board.
4. That reducing the number of Hall Senior positions available in Halls will have a detrimental effect on the ability of Pastoral Teams to achieve their aim in delivering a strong Hall community for first year and returning students.

The Union Resolves

1. To mandate the Union President and the Deputy President (Welfare) to campaign to the College Accommodation Service seeking a partial discount on Hall Senior rents across the standard 38 week let, and to lobby College to retain the current number of Hall Senior positions in light of their efforts to reduce them in previous years.
2. To mandate the Deputy President (Welfare) to review the training given to Hall Seniors, with a view to expanding the provision given to a year-round basis similar to that offered to WBRN volunteers.
 - a. This should include, but not be limited to, programmes such as Active Bystander and Look After Your Mate which are currently offered.
 - b. The feasibility of schemes such as formal MHFA should be considered for Seniors.
3. To establish an informal Union committee incorporating Senior and Warden representatives of all Halls of Residence as a means of sharing good practice and communicating concerns to ICU. This informal committee will be supported by the Deputy President (Welfare) and will replace the hall representation aspect of the former Communities and Welfare Board.