

IMPERIAL COLLEGE UNION

UNION COUNCIL PAPER

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# Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme

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## Union Notes

1. Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (UROP) is an incredible opportunity for undergraduate students who wish to experience the research environment and develop skills that will further their appreciation for their field of study.
2. As STEM students, Imperial undergraduates particularly benefit from such a scheme, which helps them develop skills and become competitive applicants in a range of post-graduate destinations - be it graduate studies, industry, etc.
3. While every undergraduate student can, in theory, undertake a UROP experience upon agreement with a faculty member, many of them depend on funding sources (like the UROP bursary scheme) to handle the expenses of living in London for the duration of the research experience.
4. There is only a very limited number of UROP bursaries awarded to students every year. While some students opt to handle expenses on their own, a significant portion do not have that privilege, thus giving up a research opportunity to do paid work instead.
5. There are currently no clear selection criteria for a successful UROP bursary application - is it based on academic performance, project, quality of writing, supervisor statement?
6. It is particularly challenging for new PIs to finance UROPs using their own funds; yet they are often also those who benefit the most from UROP students while providing high quality supervision (small labs, more time, etc).

## Union Believes

1. A research internship is a valuable part of a STEM education.
2. There is an already existing socio-economic gap between students who need to work in summer to support themselves financially and those who do not, which is reflected in the demographic of students that can afford to do research without the support of the UROP bursary.
3. The UROP bursary application process and success criteria as they stand are completely intransparent to staff and students alike

## Union Resolves

1. The Union's stance is that unpaid UROPs should be banned
2. For the Union to advocate for an introduction of additional UROP funding for means-funded bursary categories for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Additional funding resources should come from alumni donation, funding reallocation, etc.
3. To lobby the College to create a working group with student representatives to review the UROP bursary application questions and selection criteria.