

Executive Committee Manifestos

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The below are the manifestos which the 2020/21 Executive Officers ran with during their election period. These manifestos declare the aims and intentions of the officers once they became elected.

Academic Affairs

Lucia Pedroso | 2020/21

N/A

Accommodation

Oscar Ward | 2020\21

Why I'm running

It's been a very busy year and I've learnt a lot about the difficulties that the SOAS community faces with housing. It's a dire situation and the university is not doing enough to protect its students. Safe housing is vital to mental health and SOAS is complicit in failing people by signing contracts with exploitative housing providers making SOAS students fall victim to the harshest parts of the exploitative predatory housing market in London.

I've also been spending a lot of time working interally within the union and have been heavily involved with being a trustee of the Students' Union. I've still got more time at SOAS and I'd love to hear about as many people's probelms as possible. I've hosted some fun events including a panel discussion with the London Renter's Union and the IWGB trade union which highlighted that the housing struggle is closely linked with the struggle to stop capitalism's relaince on exploiting the most vulernable people in our society. I'll continue to work closely with liberation officers to make sure that marginalised voices are at the front of the stuggle for housing justice at SOAS.

I'll always be around for a chat and am willing to go and shout at / sort things out with the following people on your behalf:

- *Your landlord who won't fix anything*
- *The halls manager who refuses to give you your deposit back*
- *The university when they refuse to provide you with emergency funds leaving you with the possibility of homelessness*
- *Your flatmate who is making you feel uncomfortable in your home*
- *Your other flatmate who won't clean anything up and it's affecting your mental health*
- *& basically anybody else you want me to have a shout at, I'll give it a go!*

How Bad Is The Situation?

- *SOAS has a responsibility to its students to create links with accommodation providers that will protect and support its students, not jeopardise their safety, they are failing in their duty of care*
- *SOAS' accommodation strategy is appalling. Though some steps have been taken to improve things there is still a lack of providing safe housing for students such protects their mental health, physical health, privacy and dignity.*
- *SOAS management needs to fund & find more affordable places for students, and support international & working class students seeking housing in London. In*

September a room in Dinwiddy will cost £169 per week, which is over £700 per month, not even remotely affordable. The accommodation office will consistently present incredibly expensive and bad housing as adequate and good value.

What Am I Going To Do?

- *SOAS needs to take responsibility for sexual and gender based violence in their accommodation. I will continue to work with and support survivors and campaigners on this.*
- *I'll carry on with more events, more flat-hunting brunches, social mixers, halls open forums and flatmate conflict resolution sessions.*
- *I will push for the SU and University creating emergency funds/loans to help prevent homelessness and provide urgent support people in our community escaping violence and exploitation.*
- *This last year has been very casework focused and there have been some great wins, during my next term I want to ramp up campaigns, working with the London Renter's Union and a SOAS #CutTheRent campaign.*

***Everybody has the right to a safe and dignified home,
We shouldn't feel bad to fight to get what we deserve.***

Anti-Racism

Sohane Yahya & Hisham Parchment | 2020/21

- **New PoC Climate Bloc**
To combat the whitewashing of protest against global warming and climate change, we will establish a bloc that prioritises the needs, concerns and safety of activists of colour
- **Anti-Racism Week**
In addition to BHM, we want a more forward-facing project week of talks and workshops centred around anti-racism practice and activism
- **Lobbying For a Fully-Funded Decolonisation Workshops**
We will continue our work on establishing mandatory workshops for freshers on 'Decolonising Your Mind'. Our student community needs this now more than ever.
- **Focus on QTIBPOC Mental Health Services**
Pressure the university for better services for students, including more representative and fully accountable pool of councillors and to create other new channels of support
- **BME Students' Network**
Centralising the work of all anti-racist societies and campaigns on campus, the new network aims to ensure the longevity of existing projects and provide support and resources for anyone interested in starting something new

Campaigns

Ella Spencer | 2020/21

I am a Second year International Relations student involved in Decolonising Our Minds, Preventing Prevent, SOAS Assembly and Demilitarise SOAS. My pronouns are she / her.

Support existing campaigns:

- *Support Preventing Prevent and implement the SU's UGM policy against the Islamophobic and discriminatory policy, focusing on mandatory workshops for staff and students.*
- *Continue working with SOAS Assembly to inform and mobilise students around cuts and the increased marketisation of higher education; how this impacts students' education and how they can support themselves and SOAS staff like Fractionals For Fair Play.*
- *Work with Demilitarise SOAS to end SOAS' contract with the Ministry of Defence and other investments and collaborations that benefit from the arms trade.*
- *Ensure that Trans* Dignity campaign is centred in all campaign and SU work.*

Goals:

- *Create a permanent space for all campaigns to meet up twice a month, to build on connections and support as campaigns and as a community.*
- *Political education and radical learning spaces about soas and beyond to be incorporated in the 2020 freshers calendar.*
- *Advocate for greater transparency, accountability and democracy in the decisions of management.*
- *Through Decolonising Our Minds, push for more engagement with local issues in London like homelessness, gentrification and climate justice.*
- *Support local and international environmental movements including The Wretched of the Earth and campaigns to support indigenous people like Wet'suwet'en Solidarity UK.*
- *Improve accessibility, information and communication between campaigns and to the student body.*

#SOASISOURS

Disabled Students' & Carers

Felix Henson & Amba Janiurek | 2020/21

Felix Henson and Amba Janiurek are running to share the role of Disabled Students and Carers Officers. We believe sharing the post will allow us to be more effective in organising and advocating for you! If elected, here are some of the ideas we intend to pursue:

- **Flexibility** - ensure students are not unduly penalised for requiring study flexibility and that study materials are made more accessible.
- **Widening Participation and Education** - organising related workshops, training and talks, and reaching out to other universities to form broader events and significantly improving career options and other opportunities for disabled students.
- **Social Spaces & Creativity** - create a society, Mutany!, for disabled students and work with other societies and sports teams to make empowering, disabled friendly and accessible things to get involved in.
- **Money!** - ensure Student Support Services are able to assist students with benefits advice especially Universal Credit, PIP and Carers Allowance.
- **Make Mitigating Circumstances Affordable** - create a ring fenced fund to help towards the cost of doctors notes.
- **Research and Reform** - SOAS disability policies, including ensuring that the relevant representatives have disability justice training, and researching the attainment gap for disabled students to understand how best to tackle the problem.
- **Services Fit for All** - Push for Student Support and counselling service staff to receive cultural competency training to help in understanding students cultural needs and circumstances.
- **Save NUS Liberation** - join the fight to defend the Black, LGBTQ, Women's, Disabled, International and Parent and Carers spaces in our movement and reinstate full time officers to fight for us!
- **Mutual Aid!** - create regular supportive meet-ups, including online spaces, to encourage collective interdependence and mutual aid between disabled students, carers and our allies, and curate a comfortable, quiet wellbeing area where students can recharge.
- **Additional Promise in light of Covid-19** - We acknowledge the particular vulnerability of disabled students given recent events, especially those with compromised immune systems, and we will advocate to ensure that disabled people are prioritised and are able to represent themselves and their safety

Who are we?

Felix is a first year undergraduate Social Anthropology student. They have previously worked with Disabled People Against Cuts, on both a local and national level, as well as part of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People (GMCDP). Aside from disability related organising they have also organised homeless support events, coordinated an event for International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, is a member of ACORN, and more. Felix is currently involved in organising a festival for World Independent Living Day.

Amba is also a Social Anthropology student. She has had various lobbying successes, e.g. persuading education authorities in Wales to fund online study and exam options for

*students unable to attend school. She has since researched and co-directed a BFI documentary on the 9.5 year life expectancy gap in Bristol. Amba now works with grassroots unions, providing ongoing access advice for precarious workers with disabilities, and has similarly advised as part of a voluntary role with a charity running UBI experiments. She also has experience working with women's homeless shelters and curating well-being areas for distressed individuals. Her stage play exploring difference, *Mutant*, will be performed at Camden Fringe this year!*

Entertainment

Vacant | 2020/21

N/A

Environment

Annabelle Van Dort | 2020/21

Keep Dirty Corporations Out Of Our Education

Right now, the world's dirtiest polluters and unethical investors including BP, Barclays and Santander are being welcomed as "partner organisations" at our university. Let's start a cross-campus campaign to lift the lid on their dirty investments and free our education from corporate interests!

Decolonise and Decarbonise

Divestment was just the beginning! I am committed to pushing for reinvestment in a just transition. Through a reinvestment campaign centred on decolonisation and climate justice, we can push SOAS to reinvest funds in renewable energy. I will also push for the university to publish their annual investments AND to include student representation on their investment committee.

Intersectional Environmentalism

As a woman of colour, I am cognisant of the lack of diversity within the environmental movement. Through events such as Green Week, I will organise events that amplify narratives typically excluded within mainstream environmental discourse.

Wellbeing During the Climate Crises

I am committed to creating a support network of students during this period of environmental crisis. I will organise bi-termly meetings where students can discuss the climate crisis in a safe and depoliticised space, with emphasis placed upon wellbeing and mindfulness.

International

Jake Isaac | 2020/21

Objective

As International Students, we pay almost twice the amount as locals. It is imperative we put up a strong front during these times of crisis so as not to be taken advantage of by the management.

Skills

Professional at maintaining dialogue and keeping the channels of communication open. Good at convincing even stubborn individuals to find common ground.

Issues to Tackle

Over the last two years at SOAS, I've come across the various difficulties of an international student; sustaining an income to pay rent, finding an affordable accommodation etc. Now on top of these with the Corona virus, the university may ask us to pay for the entire year while we may never have access to the university facilities. We did not pay over £18,000 for an online degree and we need a strong voice to represent us and hold the university accountable if they do not compensate adequately.

I believe something important to any student living outside London would be to know whether classes will be held in September so as to make necessary arrangements for accommodations. As international officer, I will be following up in order to get the information out as soon as possible.

I also believe addressing the community's needs and working with the management in order to increase the number of international student applications may help improve our financial situation. This will involve largely reducing the burden that international students are subject on all avenues of establishing a life in London.

In short, my duties will be both to the international student body to ensure the Union provides support for the difficulties our community comes across and to hold the University Management accountable to us, the benefactors of the institution by paying exorbitant amounts for the sake of a stellar education, to ensure we are not exploited.

LGBTQIA+

Josh Mock | 2020/21

I am a BA Arabic and Persian student at SOAS, passionate about improving the LGBTQIA+ experience at SOAS. I am to do this by:

- **Organising regular LGBTQIA+ events and socials**, including panel discussions, film screenings, and workshops. Creating space for **alcohol-free socials**
- **Supporting the Trans* Dignity campaign and lobby** for the provision of an on-campus **Trans* counsellor**. Organise **fundraising events** to help with the provision of this
- **Creating an LGBTQIA+ community magazine and podcast** in collaboration with the SOAS Spirit and SOAS Radio to build a sense of connection amongst LGBTQIA+ students and staff at SOAS
- **Asking religious societies for a clear LGBTQIA+ inclusivity statement** explaining to what extent LGBTQIA+ students will be affirmed in faith groups at SOAS and **encouraging the creation of queer affirming religious spaces**

Mature Students

Vancat | 2020/21

People of Colour

Heleena Pankhurst | 2020/21

HELEENA FOR POC OFFICER!

Second year Politics student, she/her. 663211@soas.ac.uk

Addressing Anti- Blackness

- *Supporting the efforts of My Reading List is Black to demand the inclusion of Black thought into the curriculum.*
- *Working with the Black Student Support Coordinator to ensure Black centred student spaces are regularly held and give students opportunities to give feedback and make demands*

POC centred academia:

- *Demanding that the university puts more effort and resources into ensuring that courses are taught by staff who are from the region in question to challenge the current position of White academics holding a monopoly on courses about Asia, Africa and the Middle East.*
- *Fighting back against the dismantling of the Africa department through supporting the efforts of Art & the African Mind and keeping up with the Review of Africa process.*
- *Creating a POC Lecture Series so that students who's courses are taught by white academics still get access to POC thinkers .*
- *Challenging SOAS on its record with the BAME attainment gap & working with initiatives like Bridging the Gap to help POC students who are struggling with their studies to gain access to additional support*

Combatting racism:

- *Improving mechanisms for reporting racism and their accessibility. Ensuring that students feel comfortable reporting without fearing consequences.*
- *Reviewing current training given to staff on unconscious bias and ensuring staff get penalised and removed for racist language and behaviour.*
- *Working with Preventing Prevent & the SU - UGM policy to demand that the racist and islamophobic policy is challenged at SOAS.*

Political Education about SOAS' violence towards POC

- *Organising education for freshers about both SOAS' imperialist past and its current complicity with the British Military, Israeli Apartheid and it's systematic mistreatment of its own workers. A space to educate new students about previous and ongoing struggles and campaigns to ensure that SOAS lives by the "progressive" image it benefits from.*

LGBTQ+ POC :

- *Working with the LGBTQ+ officer to center POC voices in the planning and organisation of LGBTQ+ events & campaigns throughout the academic year*
- *Directing Trans* & Non - Binary POC to the resources of Trans* Dignity at SOAS & Using my own access to the SU to support the demands of the campaign.*

Postgraduate Research

Vacant | 2020/21

Postgraduate Taught

Vacant | 2020/21

Sports

Alex Allen & Emma Thackwray | 2020/21

Good evening, I'm Alex, a 2nd year Politics and International Relations student. Playing sports has always played a massive role in my life. One of the first ways I ever made any sort of contact as a fresher at SOAS was through football events such as the organised kickabouts during freshers, or the trials for the football team. In my first year at SOAS I played for the men's football team and became the social sec. This year I played a more important role as the president of the men's football society. Throughout the year I have learnt and understood that under the eyes of management and others, sports at SOAS is definitely considered as secondary to everything else that goes on, and this is something I believe can only be changed with further collaboration by all sports teams. Going by the words of Russel Crowe "Whatever comes out of those fates, we've got a better chance of survival if we work together. Do you understand? If we stay together we survive".

Hi I'm Emma, a third year Chinese and Economics student. Since starting at SOAS I have played for the SOAS women's football team, been social secretary and president, and have been heavily involved with sports as a whole: in London and while away in Beijing. Sports has made my university experience some of the best times so far, and I really look forward to making it the best I can for future SOAS athletes! This year is about making SOAS sports respected, recognised and loved!

Involvement

For freshers and returning students we will be running taster sessions in terms one and two, allowing individuals to meet others with similar interests, increasing participation, and to give opportunities for exchange students to easily get involved in the sport scene at SOAS. We want to continue running mixed training sessions, to increase accessibility and inclusiveness within SOAS sports. Lastly we want to make sports noticed and appreciated at SOAS. We will use the sports boards to not only publish fixtures, but results throughout the year. We will also create a SOAS sports website fo the athletes' voices to be heard.

Unity

Sports at SOAS has created such a community feel, and we want to grow it even more! We want to organise fortnightly sports nights; having each team take turns to host them, varying the types of activities, and branching outside of sports too! This will create a sense of unity, as well as interconnectedness within SOAS sports itself. We want everyone to feel like they belong.

Efficiency

We want to increase efficiency in the planning and execution of sports at SOAS. We want to increase the transparency of budgets within teams, and increase communication with the Students' Union before the start of the academic year. We want to allow teams to be autonomous in the planning of their fixtures and results via Playwaze, giving full control back to the students.

Trans* & Gender Identity

Victor Max Smith & Lizzy Cox | 2020/21

Hi, we are Lizzy and Victor. We're running together for the position of Trans and Gender Identity Officer because we know that the experiences of trans* and nonbinary people are so diverse that it's impossible for one person to speak for all of us. We don't think that two people can speak for all of us either, so our top priority is to listen to everyone in the trans* and nonbinary community at SOAS, particularly students who are multiply marginalised. We will be working closely with Trans* Dignity to address issues such as the provision of safe and clean gender-neutral toilets and the training of staff to respond sensitively to the needs of trans* and nonbinary students.*

Trans Dignity has drawn attention to the lack of appropriate support for trans* and nonbinary people at SOAS. We will help them in their campaign to get a trans* counsellor to SOAS, and in the meantime, we will try to form links with support and wellbeing organisations to start filling the gap. We will also work to ensure that there are emergency funds and other practical support systems for trans* and nonbinary students struggling with financial difficulties. Holding fundraising events is a possibility, as well as swap and gift meets for necessities like binders and makeup.*

Finally, we want to work with societies and other SU officers to make safe spaces for trans and nonbinary people to socialise. This will include alcohol-optional socials such as tea parties and film nights where we can relax and have fun in a comfortable and positive environment. We would also like to collaborate with arts and crafts societies to hold creative events in stress-free spaces that prioritise our community.*

Womxn

Emma Masing & Tara Bhat | 2020/21

1. **We will improve student access to reproductive health resources**

We will work with expert organisations to deliver introductory workshops on using menstrual cups, as well as providing free STI self-testing kits. We will also hold sanitary product drives, providing an opportunity for those who are able to donate pads and tampons to those (at SOAS and in the wider community) who are in need

2. **We will improve access to trans*-specific health services**

We will support the Trans Dignity campaign with funding: training SU staff, academic staff and the student body in how to better care for and accommodate trans* students on and off campus. We will also push for SOAS to hire more trans* councillors to work in-house at the university, but also advise students on how to access NHS gender identity clinics off campus.*

3. **We will create and facilitate spaces for womxn with disabilities to safely access support**

This includes support groups for womxn with disabilities/multiplicities of disability (physical disabilities, mental health issues, learning disabilities) to explore how this experience intersects with other facets of their identities. We also know how isolating disabilities can be and will organise student-led schemes for womxn to partner/group up to student and prepare for exams or just grab coffee and chat about their experiences as womxn with disabilities.

4. **We pledge to provide greater support for survivors of sexual abuse, harassment and gender-based violence**

More survivors workshops will be staggered throughout the academic year so to ensure that the student body is able to access these resources, and through an online sign-up sheet so that survivors do not have to email personally and disclose their situation if they want to partake in these workshops. We will also support Account For This' policy-making workshops and push SOAS to better their disgraceful and ineffective policies and reporting procedure. We also believe that bar staff should be trained as welfare contacts so that the JCR is safer for womxn to have fun every evening.

5. **We promise to bring the needs of Womxn of Colour to the forefront of the SU agenda**

We will push to hire more mental health professionals who themselves are WoC from different backgrounds in order for them to understand cultural nuances. We also want to create support networks for womxn who are international students from across the global south to meet and chat about their racialised experiences in a new country. We will make it our mission to share information among WoC and international students on reporting assault/harassment, accessing reproductive health facilities, engaging with queer and trans communities at SOAS etc.*

6. **We promise to advocate for working womxn and mothers**

We will facilitate child care spaces for those womxn, staff and students alike, who are caring for a dependent, i.e. during events, panels, socials etc. We must also honour and recognise the different forms of labour contributed by womxn in all aspects of SOAS life

7. **We will push for the addition of more convenient gender neutral toilets and other hygiene amenities in the main building**

This also includes the introduction of sanitary waste bins in ALL toilets, and for them not to be labelled as 'feminine hygiene' bins. Although this is not necessarily a womxns' issue only, it will make for a more comfortable, dignifying and accessible experience for all students

8. **We guarantee that we will organise new, fun and exciting opportunities for womxn at SOAS to socialise, be creative and get recognition for their labour**

The ideas we have on the agenda so far include theatre, music and art workshops, performance showcases, more womxns' drag nights, art exhibitions, spoken word nights, womxn-centric late licences, group trips, among many others. We will also be setting up an online form to send us suggestions for womxns' events and socials!

Working Class Students

Katie Saunders & Michael Shand | 2020/21

Kitchen Collection

- *An opportunity for the SOAS community to reduce waste and ease the transition into independent living for new students by sharing unwanted necessities, such as spare pots, pans and cutlery*

Access to Funding

- *To make funding at SOAS more visible and accessible, removing unnecessary barriers and lobbying the school to ring fence funds to protect working class students from university budget cuts*

Class Consciousness

- *Getting class issues on the curriculum, increasing working class presence, politics and campaigns on campus and emphasising the intersectional nature of classism with other systems of oppression at uni*

Wine and Whine

- *Come join other working class students for cheap drinks (both alcoholic or virgin) and chats about the challenges of classism*

Hidden Costs of Uni

- *Decreasing printing costs and reducing the burden of other hidden costs, such as travel, textbooks, stationary and other course materials*

Living and Working

- *Intro to budgeting in London, cheap deals, meals and nights out for students and access to information about workers' and renters' rights and unions*