

Sabbatical Officer Manifestos

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

Activities & Events

Hasan Zakria | 2020/21

1) For the culture!

Cultural takeovers of JCR and Senate House, e.g: Somali, Palestinian, Italian, Pakistani nights. Expect: Food, music, art, poetry (These will also serve as platforms for activists to raise awareness + funds for local causes)

Cross-cultural events, e.g: Roti vs Ramen, Iraq x Brazil, KPOP vs Khaleeji, Bollywood vs Nollywood

Market stalls: Selling food, art, jewelry, clothes, fabrics, zines etc. from different regions and countries. Run by both external creatives from those regions + SOAS Students

Global cinema series: Showcasing both the latest and classic films from around the world, from Devdas and Parasite, to Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and Pan's Labyrinth

2) Making sure EVERY PARTY is UNFORGETTABLE!

Continuing the success of my XXXPRESSION Late License : Inviting drag artists, singers, rappers, weapons performers and the UK's Hottest DJs to create memorable nights!

Xtravaganza!- Balls that are actually AFFORDABLE! Prizes for best dressed, runways, photo booth, Chocolate Fountain, voguing, Themes: Supermodel realness, Represent your culture, Leather & Lace

Say GOODBYE to bad music in the bar: The UCL intruders may love it, but we don't. Let's get some good ol' afrobeats, Rnb, Hip-Hop. In fact, think you have a great playlist? Then book a slot and plug your phone in.

3) More collaborations between societies!

For example, A night for South Asian Womxn (Fem Soc x Pak Soc x India Soc x Bangla Soc), A night for black students (ACS x Somali Society x Art and The African Mind Society x Natural Hair Society), Muslim experience in South Korea (ISOC x Korean Soc)

Regular check-ins with society committees on their wellbeing and providing assistance with events

Termly socials for society Presidents and committees to encourage collaboration and more events throughout the year

4) Activity and Skills Workshops

1 hour Intro to... series: Yoga, hennah, twerking, photoshop, makeup, vlogging, Kathak etc.

Find your confidence!: Public speaking, motivational speakers, How to do a Ted Talk

Sex and Relationships Advice: Safe sex, periods, STDs, warning signs in relationships, how to improve communication during sex, kinks and fetishes etc.

5) Liberation Months ---> ALL YEAR ROUND

Minimum of 3 events per term centering marginalised and underrepresented groups, i.e LGBTQIA+, Trans and Non-Binary, People of Colour, Womxn etc.

Greater intersectionality, for example events for Queer Womxn of Colour, Black Muslim Womxn etc.

6) Spaces to either RELAX or LET OFF STEAM

External guests to provide animal therapy, such as Puppies and Alpacas + Hand/Head massages

VENT: A confidential, non-judgmental space to just vent about anything you want and openly discuss mental health

Sanctuary: A dedicated healing space, expect bean bags, incense, mood lighting, stress balls, colouring books, paints, lo-fi on repeat

7) Let's get political!

An up-to-date directory of organisations and charities providing opportunities for students to get involved with local causes

A 'link-up' system with activists at SOAS, where you can understand how they got into activism, what activism may look like etc. to dispel any misconceptions and make activism more accessible.

Democracy & Education

Sabrina Shah | 2020/21

Vote Sabrina #1 for Co-President Democracy and Education

"Our fight is for a more human-centric university and the production of knowledge which disrupts the transactional nature of market exchanges, colonial knowledge and the exercise of imperial power." - Shaeera Kalla

- *Actively reject the Prevent agenda at SOAS and ensure that Black, POC and Muslim students are all protected and given sufficient support against this racist policy.*
- *Campaign and lobby management to fulfil the BDS referendum of 2015 and end SOAS's relationship with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem*
 - *HUJ has dorms and part of its campus built on occupied Palestinian land - illegal under international law - in violation of the 1967 borders (UN)*
 - *Forcing students undertaking the course to be complicit in Israeli apartheid*
 - *Undermining the mental health and position of Palestinian students on campus*
- *Putting the 'A' back in soAs*
 - *Working with Art and the African Mind to support initiatives that centre African academics and demanding a revitalisation of the African Studies department in terms of staff, resources and recognition given from the institution.*
 - *Putting more African thinkers, in particular, on the curriculum and on courses on Africa, and increasing the number of African permanent academics schoolwide.*
 - *Collaborating and strengthening an African students caucus for the active engagement and discussion of SU and School policy on implementing these changes.*
- *Centering Black thought, working with "My Reading List is Black" campaign to demand the inclusion of Black thought and tackle the institutional anti-Blackness that has caused its erasure.*
 - *Putting more Black and Black women in particular on reading lists - and increasing the number of Black permanent academics schoolwide*
 - *Having spaces for ONLY Black students so as to engage and facilitate a safe space when discussing issues of institutional anti-Blackness and representative education.*
- *Push for management to hire a permanent SU Black Student Support Coordinator*
 - *How can this position be temporary when Black students experience is continuous and continuously made harder with a lack of recognition of the institutional anti-Blackness at SOAS.*

- *Work with the Equality and Liberation officer to examine and take steps in improving the BAME attainment gap*
 - *POC are the most disenfranchised sections of the university and within academia and therefore we need to ensure that their struggles both within the classroom and within the wider campus are centred within the discussion and dialogue.*
- *Specifically understand the systemic and institutional disadvantage of Black students within the University who are disproportionately affected by the attainment gap in comparison to their white counterparts.*
- *Ensure that fractional members of staff are ensured pathways to permanency and end casualisation at SOAS - with a commitment first to not cut the fractional budget*
 - *The teaching conditions for students will be further strengthened when our GTA's, TF's and STF's are given dignified and secure working conditions and contracts.*
 - *BAME staff and in particular BAME women are most often in the most precarious contracts and therefore this reflects the wider issue of racial inequality at SOAS*
 - *We must challenge the marketisation of education and the creation of the consumer/service provider narrative in the wider "business-model" SOAS has created and seeks to pursue under new Director, Prof. Adam Habib.*
- *Work to make course materials and lecture notes more accessible for students across campus*
 - *By ensuring lecturers are attaching further notes on their presentations when uploaded to Moodle*
 - *Recording lectures for students who require more accessible forms of learning however also understanding that increased surveillance in Universities requires students to be safeguarded and protected as such - student engagement in lectures should not be included in recordings.*

Equality & Liberation

Roza Atac | 2020/21

Hi, my name is Roza, and I'm in my third year of studying International Relations and Politics. I have been actively involved in the SOAS community since I started. I have helped plan and organize events and solidarity campaigns with the SOAS Kurdish Society since my first year.

As a Kurdish American woman, I am firmly committed to making an effort towards giving a voice to marginalized and othered groups on campus and supporting them by all means necessary. I believe in strengthening platforms that promote decolonizing the institution, anti-racism, anti-fascism and transgender rights.

A few things I have done while in school have been getting Kurdistan on the International Relations of the Middle East curriculum; I successfully enacted a motion to remove the mural of Junot Diaz and replace him with Mehmet Aksoy. I am passionate, driven, and not afraid to put up a fight when needed. I will do my best to create a safer, fairer and more comfortable environment for you!

My manifesto:

1) *Open up a dialogue to implement the demands of the **Trans-Dignity Campaign**, which the SU has not prioritized. Work towards getting a mental health professional for trans folks.*

2) *Create a way to have discussions with management more often other than in a situation of crisis. They are failing the student body; we should not have to wait for a major crisis in order to get a chance to speak directly with them. I would like to work towards establishing a **regular dialogue with management**.*

3) *Work with liberation groups to facilitate **safe spaces** for group discussions. I want to create a **bi-monthly event** where different groups can convene, discuss troubles, share tips, but most importantly speak to them in order to address their various issues better.*

4) ***Open door policy to listen to the student body voice***

5) *Fight to **diversify the curriculum** to include underrepresented voices. I plan on working with academics to encourage the inclusion of **Kurdistan**, in addition to other colonized regions, whose voices have been erased and suppressed for years.*

6) *Provide **greater support for liberation campaigns**, including **Demilitarising SOAS** and providing more support towards better implementing the BDS and Boycott Turkey campaigns.*

7) ***Better mental health support**. Building on existing mentorship programs, organising therapy groups, creating a space where students are comfortable seeking help and talking about their problems. Easier access to information for doctors and helplines.*

- 8) *Solve issues with inaccessibility of **toilets** for disabled and non-binary students.*
- 9) *Work closely with the anti-racism/ POC officers to create a **safer environment** at SOAS and to **maintain and expand** safe spaces for black students.*
- 10) ***Promote art** by marginalized groups, political pieces and facilitate liberation through art workshops.*

Welfare & Campaigns

Yasmin Elsouda | 2020/21

Vote Yasmin #1 Welfare and Campaigns

Campaigning and welfare go hand in hand, I believe in an SU that supports and facilitates collective organising spaces where community is fostered and built up so that we get to know each other and have each others' backs.

We have the power to imagine a university where the most marginalised can feel and be safe, engaged and valued and then manifest it. Let's get organised and take care of each other!

Campaigns:

Supporting and facilitating autonomous collective student organising on campus

- engaging new students through communal political education about SOAS's imperial history and present + rich history of grassroots student activism and resistance
- providing all necessary resources to facilitate organising - regular meeting spaces, materials, workshops and funds etc

Working with campaigns, societies and part time SU officers to:

- fulfil BDS mandate from 2015 school wide referendum to end relationships with Israeli universities and divest from Israeli companies respecting academic and cultural boycott of Israeli Apartheid in solidarity with Palestinian civil society
- ending SOAS's relationship with the Ministry of Defence, stopping the briefings SOAS academics give to the Defense Cultural Specialist Unit
- resisting Prevent and the securitisation of campus which violate academic freedom and the ability to learn without the threat of surveillance
- fighting for more African and Black thinkers on the curriculum to decenter white and european academics and knowledge production especially on regions such as Asia, Africa and the Middle East
- resisting the dismantling of the African studies department as a rejection of market based valuation of academic knowledge production and to preserve SOAS's specialist knowledge and teaching
- Clean accessible gender neutral toilets
- supporting precarious workers fighting for improved labour conditions by showing solidarity with campaigns such as Fractionals For Fair Play and Justice4Workers

Establishing mechanisms through which managerial decision making becomes transparent, consultative and accountable, and do so by working with all students, staff, UNISON and UCU.

- All echelons of SOAS community are involved in decision making processes that affect them, to counter track record of untransparent and unaccountable decision making
- To Establish mechanisms through which more vulnerable members of the community, especially precarious workers and marginalised students, can hold senior decision makers to account

Welfare:

Insuring the SU is approachable and accessible with an open door policy and regular student meetings (UGMs/info sessions)

Improved student support by expanding Advice and Wellbeing so that waitlists are shorter

- work with advice and wellbeing to lobby management to improve and expand the service
- Working with campaigns societies and part time SU officers to:
- facilitating consistent safe spaces for liberation groups, specifically for women of colour, black women, black students and LGBTQ+ students to meet regularly for socials or organising
- on campus Trans* counsellor
- reviewing and updating outdated university policies on liberation issues to ensure campus is safe for marginalised students implementing mandatory anti-discriminatory training for all teaching staff to facilitate safer classrooms
- making materials, information and advice accessible on how to navigate SOAS bureaucracy (mitigating circumstances, complaints procedure etc.)

Making SU hardship and liberation funds accessible in the face of increasingly inaccessible higher education

#SOASisOurs