



PASSED UGM MOTIONS & AMENDMENTS

Time:	15:00
Date:	23 rd March 2018
Location:	JCR

PASSED UGM MOTIONS – 23rd March 2018

Title:	Reform Wayfinding
Proposer:	Isadore Auerbach George (634526@soas.ac.uk)
Seconder:	Swim Franklin (627989@soas.ac.uk)
This Union Notes:	
<p>1.1 That "wayfinding" is the process of navigating a physical space and the design that aids in that.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1.2 That wayfinding is crucial to the accessibility of a space.</p> <p>1.3 That ensuring wayfinding is effective for all members, regardless of disability or language barriers, is the responsibility of an institution.</p>	
This Union Believes:	
<p>2.1 That current wayfinding measures at SOAS are insufficient in a number of ways.</p> <p>2.2 That these insufficiencies cause accessibility issues for a number of different groups.</p> <p>2.3 That the union has a responsibility to lobby the school on behalf of its members to reform and improve its wayfinding, and thus its accessibility.</p>	
This Union Resolves:	
<p>3.1 To lobby the school on behalf of its members to reform and improve its wayfinding.</p> <p>3.2 To create a committee of concerned parties to oversee the process.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">3.3 To gain necessary permissions to implement changes.</p> <p>3.4 To commit to addressing wayfinding issues at SOAS after the initial issues put forward by the committee have been resolved.</p>	

Title:	Preventing Prevent at SOAS and beyond
Proposer:	Imran Jamal- 271155
Seconder:	Daryan Omer- 634536
This Union Notes:	
<p>1.1 The Students' Union already has policy to oppose the Counterterrorism and Security Act of 2015, as per the statement in Annex 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ANNEX 1 - SU Statement on PREVENT and CTS Act 15/07/2015</p> <p>SOAS Students' Union strongly opposes the government's PREVENT strategy and its statutory</p>	

implementation through the Counter-Terrorism and Security (CTS) Act of 2015. PREVENT is an ill-defined strategy, which demands that public bodies and institutions identify those who may be drawn into “terrorism” because of their perceived “extremist ideology” in order to be “de-radicalised.” Such definition would include those with “a need for identity, meaning and belonging”, “a desire for political or moral change” and “relevant mental health issues”. This demonises Muslim and BME students and victimises those with mental health issues. We believe that it threatens academic freedom and undermines the role of universities as institutions for critical and free thought.

This loose framework sets a dangerous precedent and encourages discriminatory treatment and prejudicial judgements on the part of institutions towards their students. PREVENT’s strategy creates an insecure environment for students and limits the space for debate, as students feel monitored and under threat of surveillance. Within this context, we believe that scholarship and political dissent will be classified as “extremism”, particularly in the cases of Muslim and BME students.

The Students’ Union is committed to defending freedom of speech on campus and working to create an environment in which ideas can freely be discussed, challenged and re-shaped, as outlined in our Safe(r) Space(s) and Dignity at SOAS policies. The Students’ Union will not comply with a government strategy which aims to monitor and control students and student-life on campus, to hinder political debates and activity, and to demonise Muslim students and stigmatise mental health issues.

We will continue to work with the School to lobby against PREVENT, to not comply with CTS requirements as far as possible within the confines of the law. Where the University does have to comply with this law, we hope that any changes to policies or procedures will be decided with students and staff so that we can ensure that these do not discriminate against Muslim students or create an unsafe or intimidating environment at SOAS.

We urge any students who feel concerned or affected by these issues to contact us or drop in to the Union Office (G8).

This Union Believes:

- 2.1 The Prevent duty is toxic as it alienates certain communities and discriminates based on students ethnicity, faith, nationality and/or culture. Black and Muslim students are subjected to racial profiling and state-sponsored Islamophobia, which has no place in our universities and colleges.
- 2.2 The Prevent duty seeks to depoliticise universities by policing academic freedom, again through a highly racialised and politicised lens on determining what is ‘acceptable’ and what is not.
- 2.3 The Prevent duty is already reshaping academic institutions across the country by curtailing academic freedoms and normalising a culture of suspicion.

This Union Resolves:

- 3.1 To pursue a policy to boycott the Prevent Duty and its implementation at SOAS
- 3.2 To fight for students rights to freedom of speech and academic freedom inside the classroom and beyond
- 3.3 For SOAS to make CLEAR if, when, and how they have complied with PREVENT duty
- 3.4 To institute a Preventing Prevent working group that is mandated with challenging the School’s compliance with the Prevent duty with membership from the Student’s Union executive and other interested parties
- 3.5 To renew the SU’s mandate to defend academic expression, freedom of expression,

freedom from discrimination and freedom to organise on campus without being policed by SOAS and the UK government through its racist and Islamophobic Prevent agenda

Title:	Support the UCU call for strike action over pension dispute
Proposer:	Tiffany Johnson 655824
Seconder:	Nima Mudey 612607
This Union Notes:	
<p>1.1 a) That Universities UK, which represents 68 University employers, said it would stop offering staff traditional “defined benefit” pensions, which offer a certainty of income in retirement;</p> <p>b) That Universities UK has put out a proposal to shift staff into a riskier, less generous “defined contribution” plan, which offers no assured pension;</p> <p>c) That the SOAS Director sits on the Universities UK Board, which is the “decision-making body” of Universities UK, focussing “on UK-wide issues and those issues in the constituent nations of the UK that have UK-wide implications or interest”;</p> <p>d) That SOAS, being represented on the Universities UK Board is in an instrumental and powerful position to influence Universities UK proposals and decisions;</p> <p>e) That Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) represents a large number of academic staff nationwide, and at SOAS;</p> <p>f) That UCU ran a campaign to encourage young, career-starting academics, such as PhD students, to join the Union in 2017;</p> <p>g) That many UCU members who are in the early stages of their career are also members of the Students’ Union, and have been at the forefront of the anti-casualisation campaign at SOAS, Fractionals For Fair Play;</p> <p>h) That UCU members returned a successful ballot for strike action at SOAS and across 61 UK Universities over the pension dispute;</p> <p>i) That UCU has declared national strike days on Thursday 22nd February, Friday 23rd February, Monday 26th February, Tuesday 27th February, Wednesday 28th February, Monday 5th March, Tuesday 6th March, Wednesday 7th March, Thursday 8th March, Monday 12th March, Tuesday 13th March, Wednesday 14th March, Thursday 15th March & Friday 16th March.</p>	
This Union Believes:	
<p>2.1 a) That the UCU’s campaign to encourage young academics to join the Union, by making Union membership free for those on teaching contracts in FE colleges and HE institutions, is an important campaign for aspiring academics and in the fight against casualisation;</p> <p>b) That supporting academics on precarious contracts is an important campaign in the fight against racialised and gendered exploitation in universities, which are mirrored in issues that campaigns such as ‘Decolonising SOAS’ and ‘Why is my Curriculum White’ seek to challenge;</p> <p>c) That the pension changes proposed by Universities UK severely threaten the existence of a pension system in Higher Education, and constitute a further attack on academics, following the expansion of casualisation across the sector;</p> <p>d) That the uncertainty and precarity proposed by Universities UK are counterproductive in creating a Higher Education system which has University staff respected and treated with dignity and respect;</p> <p>e) That a defined benefit pension fund is one of the last remaining forms of job security for early</p>	

career academics and those who have worked on fixed-term, casual, or part-time contracts for most of their careers;

- f) That this attack on the USS pension scheme puts in jeopardy other HE pension schemes, such as SAUL which is also offered by SOAS, despite being fully funded;
- g) That strike action, locally and nationwide, is one of the key mechanisms to resist changes and protect the current defined benefit pension system across Higher Education;
- h) That winning this battle over pensions will give confidence to young academics, students and society more widely that we can shape our futures if we come together and take action against privatisation and commercialisation of our education and of the welfare state;

This Union Resolves:

3.1 To lobby SOAS Director, as member of the UUK Board, to roll back proposals which undermine the entire pension system and instead look into proposals to appeal for a state bailout of the pension system;

- b) To gain assurances from SOAS Senior Management Team that no student will be adversely impacted by the strike when it comes to graduation and continuation in their studies;
- c) To keep students informed about the negotiations and how students can take action to influence these negotiations to a fair resolution, for UCU members;
- d) To have the SOAS Students' Union to coordinate a student solidarity presence on UCU official picket lines at SOAS and at UCU-called protests;
- e) To respect the picket line by closing down the Students' Union on official UCU strike days and encourage students to not come into SOAS premises on official strike days;
- f) To develop, in coordination with SOAS UCU, Unison and others, any other forms of solidarity action that students can take, including providing student support at the picket line.

3.2 (Amendment) However this support does not extend to hard picket lines

3.3. (Amendment) Also, a template letter should be written up and sent out to students to send to Director Valerie Amos & UUK to put pressure on them.

Title:	Support for the SOAS Sanctuary Scholarships
Proposer:	Charlie Lawrence Jones - 629358@soas.ac.uk
Secunder:	Eliza Cass - 625658@soas.ac.uk

This Union Notes:

- 1) The Sanctuary Scholarships provide seven people a year on precarious immigration status the opportunity to study at SOAS.
- 2) Those on the Sanctuary Scholarships have no access to Student Finance (SF) and therefore no access to maintenance loans.
- 2) As it stands each year the Sanctuary Scholarship Fund can only provide £5,700 per scholar, far below the SF allowance for living in London of £11,002.
- 3) To provide the Scholars with living costs on par with those on SF, the fund requires to raise an extra £221,967 over the next five years.
- 2) The student body has committed to supporting the Sanctuary Scholarships in previous UGMs: 13th October 2016 - "To support the current waiver scheme being made more inclusive", 5th November 2015 "To call on SOAS to provide living costs for these scholarships from their annual budget."
- 3) That for the last for the previous two academic years the SU contributed £20,000 to the living

costs of the SOAS Sanctuary Scholars. An extension of funding ring fenced for the Cultures of Resistance Scholarships.

This Union Believes:

- 2.1 That supporting equal access to education for displaced people is an essential part of the union's efforts.
- 2) That as it stands the Sanctuary Scholars do not receive the financial support desperately required.
- 3) That the SU is in a position to fundraise for the scholarships.

This Union Resolves:

- 1) To support the fundraising of £20,000 per year to contribute to the living costs of the Sanctuary Scholars.
- 2) For sabbatical staff to meet with members of the Solidarity with Refugees and Displaced People Society (SRDP) at the beginning of each academic year to plan the year's fundraising efforts.
- 3) To support any individual student's or society's fundraising efforts for the Sanctuary Scholarship Fund.
- 4) To arrange three evening events per year in the JCR with money raised going towards the Sanctuary Scholarship Fund. This will include one late-license event.

Title:	Extension of dissertation deadlines for postgraduate taught students
Proposer:	Ebenezer Azamati: 655914
Seconder:	Hugo Lucas: 657298

This Union Notes:

1.1 That the ongoing strike action by lecturers across 66 universities across the UK including SOAS has caused a grave distraction to the academic plans of students especially full time postgraduate taught students who are due to start work on, and submit their dissertations by the first week of September as notices from various departments indicate Deadlines for essays falling during the strike have been extended to Friday 23rd March in order to mitigate the impact of the industrial action on students. The current deadline extension does not take into account the disruptions that postgraduate taught students will face in handing in their dissertations in September and as such, there has been a neglect in mediating this impact.

This Union Believes:

- 2.1 The strike action has prevented a lot of postgraduate students from having access to their supervisors to enable them to discuss aspects of their dissertations. Lecturers/supervisors have neither been available to meet nor responsive through other media of communication.
- 2.2 The current deadline extension for essays to Friday 23rd March, as a result of the strike action, has affected the dissertation plans of postgraduate students and eaten into their planning time.

2.3 This action is necessary because it will help make up for the time postgraduate students may lose if the strike continues during term three.

This Union Resolves:

3.1 That a petition with signatories of postgraduate students and sympathizers be presented to University management by the Students' Union on behalf of postgraduate students requesting for a three-week-extension of dissertation deadlines which will effectively mean that dissertations will have to be submitted on September 29th, instead of September 8th.

3.2 That the executive officers of the Students' Union creates a special working group tasked to negotiate this with University management on behalf of postgraduate taught students.

3.3 That the special working group be tasked to update movers of the motion or all postgraduate taught students on the progress of this demand through a weekly correspondence.

3.4 That the Union prioritizes this request and acts on it with maximum speed and alacrity.

3.5 (Amendment) That the Union also pushes this issue forward on behalf of Undergraduate students.

Title:	To get the Students' Union to be inclusively political and hold a democratic consultation (meaning 25% student body will be consulted) on terms of a campaign for tuition fee refunds (henceforth TFR).
Proposer:	Robyn Arthey 658131
Seconder:	Rachel Tam Hau-Yu 657519
This Union Notes:	
<p>1.1 That over 2000 people/SOAS students have now signed the petition 'Refund for SOAS students for the classes missed during the strike'.</p> <p>1.2 That this fact indicates there is widespread support for the notion of refunding tuition fees, vis a vis "fully support[ing] the staff strike at SOAS, but, in addition to this we believe that we are entitled to a refund from management for the classes that will not be taught."</p> <p>1.3 that support for TFR has come in the form of an academic boycott calling on all students to boycott the 23rd March deadline, which has now ben called off.</p> <p>1.4 That SOAS's official position, as was expressed by Deborah Johnson in an e-mail dated 15 March, is that since fees contribute not only to contact hours but to supporting a wide-range of facilities and activities including learning resources, the library and support services for students, it is not expected that refunds would need to be made.</p>	
This Union Believes:	
<p>2.1 This Union believes that a tuition fees campaign has received widespread support among the student body, and as such it would be undemocratic and in bad form, to not take this forward to an official consultation period and the design of a relevant and politically inclusive campaign.</p> <p>2.2 This Union believes that the argument that tuition fees need to be reclaimed can be critiqued</p>	

as validating the marketisation and commercialisation of education, and yet this is the working reality for students today. A more nuanced account can be incorporated into proceedings rather than elided over or assumed to be regressive.

2.3 This Union believes that a significant proportion of students who are working class, BAME, on unpaid or low-paid internships, differently abled, carers, unemployed, have health difficulties, do not speak English as a first language, and possibly other groups not mentioned here, would be disadvantaged if this campaign was not actively, creatively and pragmatically supported by SU.

This Union Resolves:

3.1 This Union resolves to hold a wide consultation period (of a length spanning a recommended timeframe of 2 weeks, to be implemented with due notice, consulting at least 25% of the student body) on the terms, design and implementation of this campaign.

3.2 This Union resolves to begin as more politically inclusive -given this has not been the tone so far - and to design in efforts to ensure political inclusivity throughout this TFR campaign if it goes ahead.

3.3 This Union resolves to plan the action standing in full solidarity for lecturers in their campaign for a secure pensions future, and with mind to overhauling the educational system, but also caring for current students' lives and futures.

3.4 (Amendment) This Union resolves that tuition fee refunds should go back into a collective hardship fund.