

UGM #4 27th Feb 2019

UGM AGENDA

Time:	15:00-17:00
Date:	27th February 2019
Location:	JCR
Chair:	Myriam Kane, NUS NEC member
<p>Agenda</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ground rules and Introduction 2. Emergency motion: The referendum on the change of the structure of the Trustees for the Students' Union is undemocratic and needs to be cancelled 3. Motion #1: Co-President for a Black* Officer / Black Pastoral Co-ordinator 4. Motion #2: Paint over Junot Diaz mural in the JCR 5. Motion #3: Paint over Junot Diaz mural with someone who has contributed to the Kurdish struggle 6. Motion #4: Motion for the Implementation of the Practice of Anonymity in the Assessment Process for All Departments 7. Motion #5: Restore Monday Night Rebetiko @ SOAS 8. Motion #6: Support Migrant Connections Festival 2019 (MCF) 	

Carried over emergency motion from 19th Feb

Title:	The referendum on the change of the structure of the Trustees for the Students' Union is undemocratic and needs to be cancelled
Proposer:	Imran Jamal 271155
Seconder:	Valeria Racu 640629
<p>This Union Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 The referendum announced on 6th February 2019 is undemocratic 1.2 There has not been a debate or discussion on what the proposed changes will mean to the future of the Union 1.3 There has been misinformation in the way the referendum has been promoted 1.4 There is a flaw in the question as it is a two part question that requires a two part response and simple yes/no is inadequate 	

1.5 The information provided is mistaken as it suggest the new structure would entail 73% student representation. However, co-presidents should not be counted as students, and therefore the new structure would have only 47% student representation on the most powerful body of the Students Union.

This Union Believes:

- 2.1 There is no clarity as to why and how the proposed changes have been proposed
- 2.2 There has been a democratic deficit on how the process and information about the referendum has been conducted and shared
- 2.3 There has been no opportunity for those who disagree with the proposed changes to organise a counter campaign
- 2.4 There has been no consultation on the question/s and the structure of the referendum
- 2.5 There is a need to change the current structure of the SU Board of Trustees, but the consultation process needs to be done in a more democratic and transparent way

This Union Resolves:

- 3.1 To cancel the referendum and annul all results immediately
- 3.2 To undertake an accountability process as to why the consultation has been done in the way that it was
- 3.3 To create spaces for conversations on a possible new structure in a way that is democratic and transparent

Motion #1

Title:	Co-President for a Black* Officer / Black Pastoral Co-ordinator
Proposer:	Lavinya (645548)
Seconder:	Chris (638374)
<p>1.1. There is currently no one who represents the issues Black students face as a top priority in the SU or at a full time level.</p> <p>1.2. Black students face continued racism on campus - both overt and covert discrimination (anti-Blackness from white people and NBPOC)</p> <p>1.3. Black students face anti-blackness by lecturers and non-academic staff around campus (penalised in assessment, dangerous tutorial and lecture dynamics)</p> <p>1.4 Black students face microaggressions from lecturers and students alike, in classrooms and around campus</p> <p>1.5 Black students face backlash when incorporating Black and non-Anglo/European language scholars/ideologies into their work</p> <p>1.6 Black issues are subsumed within other roles such as POC Officer and Equality + Liberation, which fail to meet the demands of Black issues on campus</p>	

1.7 Within the SOAS body, initiatives like the Decolonising SOAS campaign have failed to tackle specific issues Black students face whilst on campus

1.8 Constant meetings with departments have not produced results and therefore taken time away from Black students

1.9 Black students are forced to advocate for their wellbeing which distracts them from focusing on their academic work, and perpetuates the Black attainment gap

1.10 Black students have no immediate point of contact within the SOAS body who may fully understand their issues

1.11 Black students face impediments on mental health treatment in SOAS - there is a lack of tailored or explicit support for Black students (counsellors, mentoring at all levels (PG and UG))

1.12 All bodies within SOAS have failed to address the above issues in practice. The executive board, academic board, the Student Union, Widening Participation and Decolonising SOAS have not adequately addressed the issues Black students face

1.13 People disrespect Black students with the knowledge that they will not be penalised for this behaviour as the institution ignores the complaints of Black students by not taking credible action

1.14 Black students need someone in the SU/School to advocate for wellbeing and support for students of all abilities

This Union Believes:

2.1 All students deserve to receive an education where they are psychologically safe and treated with respect and dignity, especially Black students, who continue to face the same issues of anti-Blackness/racism across the sector and over many years

2.2 The marginalisation of Black students at SOAS and Black people globally in society is unique* - racism operates through a binary which Black people bear the brunt of

2.3 Having such a role will make other SU Co-presidents more productive for the rest of the student body for two reasons:

2.3.1 They can focus on the issues that pertain to them, which already does not focus on Black students. This is largely because they are unable to relate to the issues Black students face.

2.3.2 This allows greater representation of the body as a whole and allows time to be redirected to other responsibilities they face.

This Union Resolves:

3.1 The SU should create a new Co-president/ Black Pastoral Co-ordinator post beginning the new academic year (2019-2020)

3.2 This role should be full-time and paid like the other Co-presidents/staff

3.3 This Co-president / Black Pastoral Co-ordinator should have the sole responsibility of representing Black students in the SU in order to give them a voice

3.4 This Co-president / Black Pastoral Co-ordinator should represent Black students by making the institution accountable to the promises they have made*

3.5 The elected individual should be a Black person themselves *EXPLICITLY BLACK

Motion #2

Title:	Paint over Junot Diaz mural in the JCR
Proposer:	Roza Atac 652493
Seconder:	Dila Tumer 647960
This Union Notes:	
<p>1.1 Junot Diaz has been accused of sexual harassment, sexual assault, abusive and misogynistic actions towards female writers.</p> <p>1.2 The fact that his Mural has been graffitied with '#MeToo' is insufficient, as we still believe his face should not be celebrated in our spaces; it's not enough.</p>	
This Union Believes:	
<p>2.1 Those who are on the walls/celebrated in our spaces should reflect the values of the Union; ie a safe space.</p> <p>2.2 Even with the #MeToo graffiti, we do not know if even seeing the face could be potentially triggering for victim-survivors and must assume it creates an uncomfortable atmosphere.</p>	
This Union Resolves:	
3.1 To paint over the mural with someone who better reflect the values and ideology of the union	

Motion #3

Title:	Paint over Junot Diaz mural with someone who has contributed to the Kurdish struggle
Proposer:	Roza Atac 652493
Seconder:	Dila Tumer 647960
This Union Notes:	
1.1 The kurdish people, their history and it's ongoing struggle is severely underrepresented in academic and social life within SOAS, other than events held by Kurdish students to shine light on the issue.	
This Union Believes:	
<p>2.1 It is important to be aware of the ongoing struggle, and Anna Campbell, Mehmet Aksoy and Leyla Guven are significant modern examples of bravery, sacrifice and resistance. They are treasured in current Kurdish history.</p> <p>2.2 Anna Campbell: A British woman of English decent, Anna renounced her privilege as a white woman in the UK to travel to Syria and struggle with the YPJ against ISIS. Her efforts to create a democratic Syria, and fight to ending the oppression of its minority peoples are truly remarkable. Anna was also an environmentalist and internationalist, who cared and advocated deeply for</p>	

many social and political issues of the world we live in today. Sadly, she died in combat on the 15th of March 2018.

2.3 Mehmet Aksoy: Mehmet Aksoy was a British born Kurd. He travelled to Syria and joined the YPG to document through photography, film making and writing the true face of the struggle. He was killed while covering the battle to retake Raqqa in Northern Syria from ISIS. He was embedded with the People's Protection Units when ISIS fighters over ran a base where he was staying on 26 September 2017.

2.4 Leyla Guven: Kurdish mp for the HDP wrongly imprisoned by the Turkish state on false terror accusations, who has been on hunger strike since the 7th november in protest of the isolation of Abdullah Ocalan.

This Union Resolves:

3.1 To replace the existing Junot Diaz mural with one of the three activists proposed in this motion for the reasons above.

Motion #4

Title:	Motion for the Implementation of the Practice of Anonymity in the Assessment Process for All Departments
Proposer:	Dita 652524
Seconder:	Saja 638838

This Union Notes:

1.1 Practice of anonymity in the assessment process is a widely accepted method to lessen tutor/marker bias and to ensure student faith in the assessment system.

1.1.1 at present, some modules have assessments worth up to 70% of the grade that are marked without the practice of anonymity.

1.2 Currently, anonymity in assessments is practised already in particular departments at SOAS (for example, the Development Studies Department) and should be extended to all departments

1.2.1 methods of implementation already exist and the course of action are importantly doable and should be quick

1.3 It is practised already in constituent colleges of the University of London, and universities across the country

1.3.1 it's clearly not a radical policy and once again, is already practiced in some departments. Management should not, in theory, be against its application to all departments at SOAS

4. Support for this policy has been shown by both the student body and some teaching staff. This motion aims to achieve official student backing as well as the policy's implementation.

This Union Believes:

2.1 The proposed policy is one that impacts large parts of the student body – it is not a personal/individual issue impacting students on the individual level.

2.2 In the wider context of the BME attainment gap debate, this policy should have been implemented far earlier. It is a necessary part of bridging the gap and doable. It removes any tutor bias that may account for the gap in attainment.

2.3 SMART Policy – Students can call management (and the SU) into account on whether the policy has been implemented – either anonymity in assessment process is practised in all departments or not.

2.4 “Not radical but the bare minimum” - Management should not have a reason to dismiss this. It is practised already in some departments, the point of this motion is to extend this to all departments.

This Union Resolves:

3.1 The SU must hold a meeting with management with the sole purpose of establishing the practice of anonymity in assessments across ALL departments at SOAS.

3.2 The SU must publish the minutes recorded in regards to this particular motion and post these on a medium accessible to the whole student body.

3.3 The SU, or whichever co-president whose work this motion falls under, must update the student body on how the implementation of this motion/policy is going. I will personally hold them to account as this is a SMART (specific, measurable, agreed upon, realistic and time-based) policy and so the effectiveness and willingness of our representatives and the management to implement this policy can be taken into account.



Motion #5

Title:	Restore Monday Night Rebetiko @ SOAS
Proposer:	Amy Thomson 635443
Seconder:	Kate Adams 657393
This Union Notes:	
<p>1.1 Rebetiko music is the “urban blues” music of Greece, and embodies the rich melodic and rhythmic traditions of the “maqam” music of the Middle East It is also a music of forced migrations, cross-border musical sharings, prison, and social dissent.</p> <p>1.2 As organised by Ed Emery and the SOAS Rebetiko Band, rebetiko music has been played at SOAS since 2006 and is now its thirteenth year.</p> <p>1.3 On 19 November 2012 the Student Union UGM voted that Monday evenings during term-time would be “Rebetiko Night @ SOAS” in the JCR (except when the JCR is required by prior arrangement for other activities).</p> <p>1.4 The Rebetiko nights are a symbol of the values that SOAS upholds, celebrating cross-border musical sharings of music from Greece and Turkey as well as of the Near East in general.</p> <p>1.5 In September 2018 the Student Union “Events and Activities” officer terminated this arrangement. “Monday Rebetiko @ SOAS” was cancelled. On the basis that SU motions “lapse after 5 years”.</p> <p>1.6 That “lapsing” was done in breach of Student Union regulations, which clearly state that, at the first UGM of the year the motions to be lapsed “shall be presented to the members to be considered again”.</p> <p>1.7 This was not done.</p>	
This Union Believes:	
<p>2.1 Since the lapsing was done unconstitutionally, “Rebetiko Nights on Mondays” remain in force, as per the 2012 UGM motion.</p> <p>2.2. The JCR should be reserved for Rebetiko on Monday nights during term time (subject to advance requests by other societies, with due notice).</p> <p>2.3. “Monday Night Rebetiko” provides good music, song and dance on a night when SOAS is generally deserted, as well as generating revenue for the Bar. As such, these weekly events should be supported.</p>	
This Union Resolves:	
<p>3.1 To reserve Monday evenings for Rebetiko performances provided no other society/ student group wishes to book it having provided adequate notice of wanting to do so.</p> <p>3.2. To affirm its support for the original SU Motion, on the grounds that it was lapsed unconstitutionally and without proper process.</p> <p>3.3. To publicise the event across London networks to ensure that Monday evenings at SOAS continue to be an established venue for this unique style of music.</p>	

Motion #6

Title:	Support Migrant Connections Festival 2019 (MCF)
Proposer:	Malena Bastida Antich 639858
Seconder:	Valeria Racu 640629
This Union Notes:	
<p>1.1 that connecting with other people with similar experiences is a way of building solidarity and support networks between migrants who struggle in a hostile environment such as this city and this country</p> <p>1.2 that a motion was passed on 17th January 2019 in which the union resolved "to continue providing support to groups supporting the fight against migration detention"</p> <p>1.3 that MCF is currently fundraising for its 2019 edition (https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/migrant-connections-festival-2019)</p>	
This Union Believes:	
<p>2.1 that for the last two years, MCF has been a space for migrant people from different backgrounds to get together and connect</p> <p>2.2 that in its passed editions, MCF has clearly supported the fight against migration detention by hosting workshops and events facilitated by collectives actively fighting against migrant detention.</p> <p>2.3 that the creation of spaces such as the MCF are essential for combating the hostile environment many migrants find themselves in</p> <p>2.4 that SOAS Students' Union resources, beyond financial ones, could be useful in the fight against discrimination against migrants.</p>	
This Union Resolves:	
<p>3.1 to donate £500 to the Migrant Connections Festival collective for the organisation of its 2019 edition</p> <p>3.2 to facilitate any other kind of support that the collective may need - such as hosting community building and fundraising events, or providing spaces for meetings and organising activities - whenever in the SU's capacity</p> <p>3.3 to continue providing support to groups supporting the fight against migration discrimination and detention</p>	