



Union General Meeting Minutes

Time:	17:00-19:00
Date:	24 th January 2017
Location:	Atrium

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Minutes & Matters Arising
3. Report from Sabbatical Officers
4. Report from executive officers
5. Open Forum
6. Condemning Journalistic Harassment of Democracy and Education Co-President
7. Suspension of NUS Vice President, Richard Brooks
8. Jewish equality act
9. External organisations hosting events
10. Emergency Motions

Ref#	Action/Discussion	Notes
1	The chair introduced himself and gave an overview of how the meeting would proceed. He reminded the group that this was a student only meeting, and asked any non-students to leave. He also stated that recording or filming was prohibited. This was in order to make sure students feel safe to speak openly about their experiences and opinions.	
2	There were no objections to the minutes and no matters arising.	Minutes approved
3	AA, Co-President Welfare & Campaigns gave an overview of progress regarding the Justice for Cleaners campaign, the Union's Community Week of Action, the Enough is Enough campaign and Look After your Mate	All Co-President reports unanimously accepted



	<p>training sessions. She gave a call for volunteers for next year's Consent training.</p> <p>AH, Co-President Democracy & Education summarised the work the Union has been doing regarding the media attention they have been receiving. He updated on the Decolonising SOAS campaign, the Boycott NSS campaign, the Union's Governance Review and the Student Representatives' Forum.</p> <p>AD, Co-President Activities & Events was unable to attend the meeting, and so a statement was read out on her behalf. She reviewed the SOAS NYE Party, society events, and discussed upcoming events including society training & drop in sessions, SOAS vs London Met Varsity, and sought suggestions for non-alcohol friendly events.</p> <p>NC, Co-President Equality & Liberation discussed a Trans* Caucus that was to be held, encouraged students to put posters in the new poster boards across Senate House, and discussed the restructuring consultation process. She thanked Nisha Phillips for her work on the restructuring process.</p>	
4	<p>NP, Academic Affairs Officer gave an overview of the restructuring process, and encouraged students to fill in an open letter that was to be sent around. She stated that if the process continues to be un-consultative the Union will take further action.</p> <p>DS & MB, Anti-Racism Officers read a statement regarding recent press allegations. They expressed that battling all forms of discrimination is a priority, and claimed that their position had been misrepresented.</p>	
5	<p>A student asked about what progress had been made regarding lecture recordings. A discussion followed with AH about what steps needed to be taken.</p> <p>Another student asked whether outsourcing was to be part of discussions relating to restructuring. NC responded.</p>	
6	<p>Speech For: DC gave context of the motion & expressed support for the Students' Union and the work they were doing.</p> <p>There was no speech against.</p>	Motion Passed



<p>7</p>	<p>Speech For: MB, Anti-Racism Officer outlined the recent actions of the NUS VP Union Development and expressed support for the NUS President.</p> <p>Speech Against: BC expressed that, although she doesn't necessarily agree with the actions, she didn't feel the Officer should be made to resign for showing opposition.</p> <p>Speech For: A student stated that Richard Brooks is free to express what his views are, but the student believed that he was more akin to a provocateur, working behind students' backs. He believed this was undemocratic.</p> <p>There was no further speech against.</p>	<p>Motion Passed</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>AS presented the motion, outlining the recommendations and the need to acknowledge and address institutional racism within the University.</p> <p>Amendment Proposed –</p> <p>Replace point 3.7 with:</p> <p>3.7 Jewish students, like all other minority groups, should be taken seriously when making complaints about acts of hatred against their group, and that the students' union should investigate such complaints fully. In the investigation process the students' union should be guided by the following definition of anti-Semitism, put forward by Professor David Feldman from the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism. Professor Feldman proposes 'two distinct but complimentary definitions of anti-Semitism. One definition focuses on discourse, the other on discrimination.</p> <p>I. When we consider discourse we focus on the ways in which Jews are represented. Here we can say, following the philosopher Brian Klug, that anti-Semitism is 'a form of hostility towards Jews as Jews, in which Jews are perceived as something other than what they are.'</p> <p>Accordingly, anti-Semitism is to be found in representations of Jews as stereotyped and maligned figures. One such stereotype is the notion that Jews constitute a cohesive community, dedicated to the pursuit of its own selfish ends. [...]</p> <p>II. In addition to anti-Semitism which arises within the process of representation there is also anti-Semitism which stems from social and institutional practices.</p>	<p>Motion Passed</p>



	<p>Discriminatory practices which disadvantage Jews are anti-Semitic.'</p> <p>Speech for the Amendment: SE expressed he felt the point as it stands was too vague, and the Union needs to be clear that any accusation of Anti-Semitism is taken seriously. He stated that, as a Jewish student, he felt it important to have a clear guideline about what anti-semitism can look like.</p> <p>Speech against the amendment: AS expressed that minorities should be given the right to self-determine, and to listen to one student over another is not helpful.</p> <p>Vote on the Amendment: Amendment Passes</p> <p>Amendment Proposed –</p> <p>Replace point 3.9 with</p> <p>3.9. To create an Interfaith Committee to work with the Anti-Racism Officer in addressing the specific oppression faced by different faith-based groups, and to bring proposals on how to address existing short comings to future UGMs. All faith based societies will be invited to nominate a member of their society to sit on the panel.</p> <p>Speech for the Amendment: PT summarised the amendment and explained the need for a multi-faith committee.</p> <p>Speech against the Amendment: AS expressed that SOAS has a specific need for a Jewish Officer.</p> <p>Speech for the Amendment: SE said the student body needs to collectively find ways to address racism and bigotry by bringing people together.</p> <p>The amendment was accepted by the proposer of the motion, AS.</p> <p>Amendment Proposed –</p> <p>Replace the second half of point 2.6 with 'and should work with the Anti-Racism Officers to combat this'.</p>	
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	<p>Speech for the Amendment: MB, Anti-Racism Officer explained that it was a misrepresentation to suggest in the motion that the Anti-Racism Officers had done no work regarding Anti-Semitism.</p> <p>Speech against the Amendment: AS stated that the Anti-Racism Officers had done no work regarding Anti-Semitism this academic year.</p> <p>Speech for the Amendment: MB, Anti-Racism Officer stated that they hadn't been contacted by any member of the Jewish Society. He explained that in order to work most effectively, they need students to come and engage with them.</p> <p>Speech against the Amendment: SE explained that the frustration felt by students should remain in the motion. He felt point 2.6 should be left as it is, and the Union can now move forward to work together on combatting Anti-Semitism.</p> <p>Vote on the Amendment: Amendment Passes</p> <p>Amendment Proposed –</p> <p>Change 'Jewish Officer' in point 4.0 to 'Interfaith Committee' to update the motion in keeping with the earlier amendment of point 3.9.</p> <p>The Amendment was accepted by the Proposer of the motion, AS.</p> <p>Vote on the Motion as a whole: Motion Passed.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Speech for: DO summarised the motion.</p> <p>Amendment Proposed:</p> <p>Replace 3.1 Resolves with '3.1 To consider a specific process to vet the nature, politics, and themes of external organisations and propose this procedure at the next UGM.'</p> <p>The Amendment was accepted by the Proposer of the Motion, DO.</p>	<p>Motion Passes</p>

<p>Speech against: AB expressed that if a student wants to invite someone to campus they should be able to have an open discussion without fear of repercussion.</p> <p>Speech for: BA stated that the group should consider what a University is. He stated that speakers that come to SOAS have a very specific impact, and we need to produce discussions in a socially just way.</p> <p>Speech against: AB suggested that the University needs to prepare students for the wider world.</p> <p>Speech for: A student stated that 2 core principles are democracy and human rights. He said we need to be careful about the organisations that speak at SOAS.</p> <p>Speech against: A student stated that we want to be safe to think what we think but we must also be able to disagree and defeat people in an argument.</p> <p>Speech for: DO stated that it was not a question of free speech. He discussed the specific incident that happened, and said it was fundamentally against our principles.</p> <p>Speech against: A student asked what was meant by hosting events. She sought further clarity.</p> <p>Speech for: SE said having open discussions about who we have in our space is important.</p> <p>Speech against: AB stated it was key to engage in debate with people you don't agree with.</p> <p>No other substantive points were made within the debate.</p> <p>Vote on the Motion: Motion Passes</p>	
<p>Other Business: AH encouraged students to boycott the NSS.</p>	