

Emergency Trustee Board Meeting

12th February 2020

4pm – 5:30pm

Chair: Maxine Thomas-Asante

In attendance: Youssra Elmagboul, Maxine Thomas-Asante, Katie Saunders, Oscar Ward, Inaki Arizabalaga, Nidah Kaiser, Malena Antich, Valeria Racu, Peadar Connolly-Davey (remotely)

Apologies: Charli Keeley, Rachel Linfield, Anabelle Jones, Ciro Puig

Introduction

Maxine: Hello everyone, thanks for coming!

This is an emergency trustee board meeting to discuss the proposed UCU industrial action, what this will mean for the SU and what we will do. We need to think about the impact of our decisions on the union and then decide what we will do. This is the only item for decision.

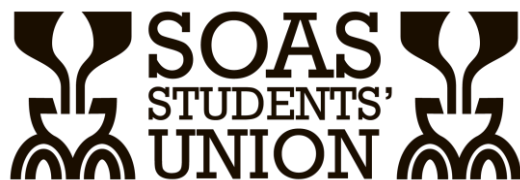
Important to remember the decisions made here impact the entire union including permanent staff, student staff, not just the students you represent. We're here in our role as trustees. This is a difficult conversation and we'll likely have differing opinions, as the student body does.

We've committed as a team to consensus decision making and we will continue that. Remember to respect each other and abide by the safe space policy. Remember that what we discuss here needs strict confidentiality as we will be discussing staff member pay.

Anna here as advisor to the board and Jack as secretary. We've reached quora as quora is 5 including at least one sabbatical officer.

Conflicts of Interest

Anna raised that all trustees (apart from sabbatical officers) being students would create some conflict however not enough to raise concern. If anyone was student staff they may have conflict, however no one present is student staff.



Decisions

[Industrial Action]

Anna: We've accepted that strikes are happening, and this impacts the functioning of the SU. What we're focussing on in this meeting is understanding as trustees what this will mean for us as an organisation and what we can do to try and minimise some of the impact where necessary.

Anna ran through a business continuity plan, ranking SU functions in terms of their priorities (1 – 4).
Summary:

SU Function	Priority	Notes
Accounting	1	Our finances need to remain in order
Comms	1	We need to keep students updated
Student group support	2	Room bookings, enquiries etc. A core function of the SU, but not as important as the above.
Events	2	Important, but not doing them won't collapse the SU
Advice and welfare support	1	A core function – expected by the education act
Representation and campaigns	1	High level representation in the school is a core function
Radio	3	Production work is a vital income stream
Governance and democracy support	1	We have a constitutional obligation to do certain levels of decision making, and we can't just stop handling complaints
Green Impact	4	Strong value of the SU but not a core function
Commercial services	2	We can function without them for a short time but long term would severely impact our financial sustainability

Anna: The work I've been doing preparing for strikes and looking at how to mitigate losses has been under the assumption staff will not cross picket lines. I cannot demand my staff to cross pickets. Would you all agree to this?

Trustee Board agreed that SU permanent staff, sabbatical officers and student staff will not be made to cross picket lines during the strikes.



With staff not crossing pickets, things to mitigate:

- Reputation of the SU
Clear communication on issues, campaigning, and the SU being a platform for debate around the strikes
- Relationship with the school: We rely on our relationship for funding, facilities, operational support, and representation.
Regular comms with key school contacts
- Increased advice and support demand
Briefing additional staff and officers on FAWs, guiding students to make early enquiries allowing staff more time to deal with complex cases.

Anna: The school have informed me that they've found a space for off campus support and welfare. We need two decisions: (1) are you happy for us to use this space, and (2) if we are not able to use this space we may need to come back together to find a space for face-to-face meetings as it's important for students to meet in person for some issues.

A discussion was had by those in attendance about the need for face-to-face support services by the SU, and the open boycott of UoL spaces.

Trustee Board agreed the SU should use the space found by the school – and while this space will ideally not be UoL space, the needs of students are more important.

Anna: As it's been decided staff won't cross pickets, this does mean that the work of the SU will likely be slower and already established priorities may be delayed. I've been assuming that staff will work from home if not permitted to enter the buildings on strike days. Could a decision be made on if permanent staff and sabbatical officers will work from home?

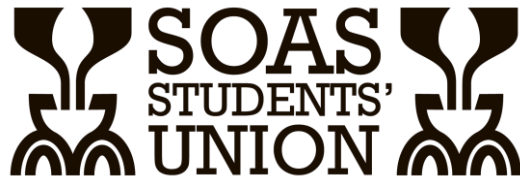
A very brief discussion was had. It was raised that Anna, being a member of UNISON, should feel as though she can strike during this period, however it was understood the impacts this would have on the SU.

Trustee Board agreed all permanent staff and sabbatical officers will work from home on strike days.

Anna: We are likely to receive an increase in complaints about the SU being closed. We recently drafted a new complaints procedure whereby all complaints come through me so that there is a central contact to correctly direct all complaints. This procedure will be very important during the strikes period. Would we, in light of the strikes, be happy to approve the complaints procedure proposed during the last meeting?

Valeria: Following the last Trustee meeting we did make some of the small changes requested.

Maxine: As a trustee I think it's important we have a robust complaints procedure in time for the strikes to handle complaints. Points made in the last meeting are valid, however this is an exceptional situation.



A discussion was had around including a conflict of interest sections into the form, and the pros and cons of having one central contact for complaints in the SU.

Trustee Board approved the new SU complaints procedure. Hopes for the future of the procedure were raised, however approved in its current form given the urgency.

Anna: It's difficult to work out what the financial implication would be, but best guess is approx. £24,000 worth of losses if the bar and shop are shut completely on strike days and evenings. This takes into account both losses of sales and staff wages. I would advise that we do pay our student staff, however this is your decision.

Maxine: We would be paying them for the scheduled hours they were due to work. Alternatively we could open in the evenings.

A discussion was had around the utility of the bar area as an organising space, and the needs of students to have somewhere on campus to socialise as strikes may increase isolation and loneliness in some students. Unanimously student staff were not expected to cross pickets, however a more detailed conversation was had around whether opening the bar in the evenings would in fact generate any income.

Trustee Board agreed student staff would not cross pickets and would be paid for any shifts scheduled on picket days. Kahled and Hanieh to be consulted about opening the bar in the evenings, depending on if it is possible for deliveries to happen outside of strike times.

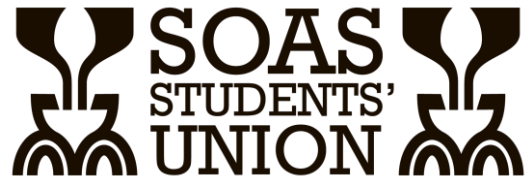
Anna: We may need to host another emergency meeting following this meeting, however, remember that trustee decisions can be made via email.

Anna: Jack has written a proposal for the spring elections. We propose to extend the nominations deadline to after the strikes period and hold 1 "super elections week" on the last week of term when everyone is back. This way all activities (e.g. hustings and the candidate meeting) will be on non-strike days. We also need a new Deputy Returning Officer – an internal person to oversee complaints. Matt Clarke from the Student Experience team has offered to step into this role. Would everyone be happy with this new timeline and the appointment of this DRO?

Trustee Board agreed to new election timeline and DRO.

Anna: Students may need to speak with SU staff on strike days. I would like to ask you to approve up to £500 spending for staff and officers to have phone numbers which students can call them on so they don't have to give out their personal numbers.

Trustee Board approved up to £500 spending for staff work phones.



Due to time constraint the planned Equality Impact Assessment was agreed to be done outside of the meeting by the trustees, to be discussed in an executive officer capacity in the next Exec Meeting.

Additional Points Discussed:

1 – If staff need to access the buildings on strike days, such as for access to the sports locker for varsity, will this be acceptable? Decision: **Yes**

2 – If students want to book rooms on strike days should the SU book them (given the UGM mandate)? Decision: **Yes, but we will inform students first of our position and discourage using SOAS rooms on strike days.**