



## Union General Meeting Minutes

21<sup>st</sup> November 2019

5pm – 7pm

Atrium

**Chair:** May Gabriel (Rethink Mental Illness)

### Agenda

1. Ground Rules and Introduction
2. Ratifying Previous UGM Minutes
3. Executive Committee Reports
4. **Motion 1:** Demilitarise SOAS: End Institutional Collaboration with the DCSU and Ministry of Defence
5. Emergency Motion
6. AOB



## Discussions and Actions

### 1. Ground Rules and Introduction

May ran through the UGM agenda, ground rules, and explained the UGM process for clarity.

May introduced a change to the UGM structure for this meeting – QUESTIONS has been moved to be the first action after PROPOSAL for motions and amendments. This is being trialed in this UGM as feedback was given that QUESTIONS after ARGUMENT AGAINST created confusion. There were no disagreements with this decision.

### 2. Ratifying Previous UGM Minutes

Imran Jamal read through a printed copy of the minutes from the previous meeting and confirmed them to be accurate

### 3. Executive Committee Reports

Peadar, Maxine, and Valeria summarised what they have been working on recently (as stated on slides).

Executive Committee member reports were also displayed on the screen. Malena and Oscar presented their reports as they were present for the UGM.

Reports available: <https://soasunion.org/pageassets/democracy/governance/EXEC-Rep-21-Nov-2019.pdf>

### 4. Motion 1: Demilitarise SOAS: End Institutional Collaboration with DCSU and Ministry of Defence

#### Proposal:

SOAS projects the decolonising agenda, however they're providing training and intelligence to the military, which is being used to neutralise countries or make them compliant with the British government. We're asking SOAS SU to incorporate the demilitarise SOAS campaign and make this a priority.

#### Questions:

Q: This motion will impose a financial burden on the school. How will this be compensated for financially?

A: This money belong to those from the countries being invaded

Q: What exactly do you want the SU to do if this motion passes?



A: We want the SU to publicise a statement asking SOAS to cut contract with DCSU / MoD, and asking faculty and academics to cease their cooperation. We're asking the SU to incorporate demilitarise SOAS as part of their policies and make this campaign their main campaign.

Q: Where do we draw the line with "not working with the government", as MoD is part of the government as whole and doesn't work in isolation?

A: The answer to this is personal, mine being that we cannot work with people who oppress others.

POI: [In regards to funding] When SOAS was made aware of demilitarise SOAS they said that they have the right to exploit their cultural knowledge in order to gain funding.

Q: Do you have any more information on what exactly is being shared by SOAS faculties and who in the military is receiving this information? How much are you personally or the SU involved in these meetings?

A: SOAS is providing military intelligence to armies, calling this "cultural expertise", who are going and expanding imperialism with this knowledge.

POI: Information on anthropology, religion, geography, etc. are provided, and all have direct implications to the military operations.

Q: Is there any evidence of if SOAS interactions have resulted in better conduct [of the military]?

A: My personal experience with the military does not support this

POI: Even though those presenting in this meeting are not presenting research, the research does exist that shows concrete examples of SOAS' impact with military operations. We know who the lecturers involved are. There are also lecturers who are against this involvement and we know who they are too.

#### Amendments:

##### Amendment 1:

"At the same time as doing 3.1. to present a way for the school to get additional funding to replace money lost by ending MoD involvement – no course cuts, job loses, salary cuts or changes to contracts (full time to fractional)"

#### Questions:

Q: Why does this need to be an amendment and not just incorporated into the campaign plan?

A: I don't trust this to be put into the campaign plan and by being an amendment this ensures this will happen

POI: The SU is already looking into more funding opportunities and ethical investments [noted by sabbatical officer]

Q: Why is it the responsibility of students to provide these alternative funding arrangements?

A: If the school takes up all recommendations in this motion they may lose approx. £400,000 at a time when they are already in financial crisis. It wouldn't be logical for us to recommend this and not provide a way to alleviate with potential harm this would cause.



POI: The school took an additional 700 students this year. Assuming £9k per student this is £6.3 million. The emotional trauma of students is worth more than £400,000

POI: The previous POI is based on home student fees only. Overseas student fees are £20k per student so this number may be even higher.

For/Against:

For: If we were to put figures (numbers) in the motion it may benefit the motion and show SOAS where they could get the money back from

Against: This labour should not be on the students. Staff within the school get paid a lot of money to do these calculations and if they are committed to ending the racism the institution is born out of then they should find the alternative funding themselves.

Vote:

**Amendment falls**

Amendment 2:

“The SU must take additional action against the participating lecturers, for example, making students aware of who these staff members are and stopping them from speaking at society events”

POI: The SU is a charity and are governed by the charity commission. As such we cannot no platform, but we can strongly advise against [societies involving these lecturers in their events]

Questions:

None

For/Against:

For: The £400,000 the school earns from associations with the DCSU / MoD go through these lecturers and so action should also go against these lecturers. They don't have to work for the MoD – this money is separate.

Against: This amendment asks to list people who take this money and tell students. This is subjecting people to threat of mob justice for their political inclinations and could lead people to being unsafe.

Vote:

**Amendment passes**

Speech Against:

None

For/Against:

None



Proposer Summary:

We're asking SOAS SU to support the demilitarising SOAS campaign and to extend their sympathy and acknowledge their duty of care to students. We all have knowledge and experiences and want to learn, but we don't want to be a part of imperialism and violence.

Vote:

**Motion passes**

**5. Emergency Motion: The SU to Support the Kurdish Struggle in North East Syria**  
(MOTION CAN BE FOUND AT THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT)

Proposal:

On October 9<sup>th</sup> Turkey began operation Peace Spring. Turkey claims this is to create a safe zone at the Syrian border to allow refugees to go home. This has displaced Kurdish people. We cannot stay silent in the face of this atrocity. I'm asking the SU to release a statement to condemn Turkey. The sabbatical officers have released a statement from the Kurdish society, however I would like them to release one on behalf of the student body.

Questions:

Q: What is Boycott Turkey about and how will the SU be involved?

A: Boycott Turkey gives information on how to stop using Turkish products and how buying Turkish products or going to Turkey funds the Turkish government and the actions they take.

Q: Where will the statement be released?

A: To be written with the Kurdish society and sent to all students in an email. The email will educate students on what's currently happening and give them information on what actions they can take.

POI: SU statement are shared in all student emails which are sent direct to all students, put onto the SU website and also the SU social media channels.

POI: The sabbatical officers have already shared and endorsed a Kurdish society statement with an added sabbatical statement of support. This new statement would be from the student body.

Amendments:

"Where the SU supports the Kurdish struggle, it should effort to include other ethnic minority voices as mentioned in 1.2"

Questions:

Q: I'm confused by the wording of the amendment. Can we change it?

A: No, we cannot amend amendments.

Against:

My issues with this amendment is that 3.3 already mentions the RiseUp4Rojava campaign, which already encompasses all minority groups in the area.



For/Against:

None

Vote:

**Amendment passes**

Speech Against:

None

For/Against:

None

Proposer Summary:

Turkey is committing human right abuses and have already used chemical weapons against civilians. Hoping this will provide a bigger platform and give support to the struggle against fascism.

Vote:

**Motion passes**

**6. AOB**

None



**Emergency Motion**

<b>Title:</b>	The SU to Support the Kurdish Struggle in North East Syria
<b>Proposer:</b>	Roza Atac
<b>This Union Notes:</b>	
<p>1.1. Following the withdrawal of US troops from the border region of Syria, Turkey began an illegal invasion of North-East Syria. This has already led to thousands of casualties and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands from their native lands</p> <p>1.2. The targets of this invasion, which has been characterized as an ethnic cleansing, are the Kurds. However, this doesn't just affect them, it also affects the Assyrians, Yezidi, Arabs and many other groups who inhabit the region</p> <p>1.3. Before the withdrawal the region was run by the administration of the majority Kurdish led SDF, based on the ideologies of bottom up politics, equality for all, ecology and women's liberation. It represented a beacon of hope and stability in arguably one of the most unstable regions.</p>	
<b>This Union Believes:</b>	
<p>2.1 The Kurdish people and the SDF are not only promoting stability and bottom up politics but promote the full equality of the sexes, equal representation in the political and governance spheres, and ecology</p> <p>2.2 The right to self determination is a basic right, and for too long the Kurds have lived as second class citizens in their own lands</p> <p>2.3 The invasion of North Eastern Syria is an attack on basic human rights, there has already been use of chemical weapons which goes against the conventions of war</p>	
<b>This Union Resolves:</b>	
<p>3.1 To issue a public statement condemning Turkey's actions and supporting the Kurdish struggle</p> <p>3.2 The Student Union to support the Boycott Turkey campaign, in doing so for the union to sign the academic petition.</p> <p>3.3 The Student Union to support the #RiseUp4Rojava campaign</p>	
<b>Amendments:</b>	