

# SOAS STUDENTS' UNION STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## 2016-19

The following objectives form the start of our Strategic Plan for 2016-19. These policy objectives were voted for in the Strategic Referendum in February 2016, and the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) have been developed by the current sabbatical team. Each objective will be used to form goals in the detailed annual operating plan developed by incoming sabbatical teams and ratified by the SU Trustees.

### **Education: Curriculum Development**

Students have prioritised involvement in the development of the SOAS Curriculum as highlighted in the previous QAA and feedback from the current curriculum review plans. The Students' Union would like to foster an environment for meaningful partnership between academics and students in curriculum development which would consist of a student and academic-led curriculum review process. By doing this we hope to embed inclusive teaching and assessment practices taking into account research on attainment gaps and mental health and in turn improve the overall quality of students' academic experience

**KPI: Full student involvement in the curriculum review and an ongoing procedure for curriculum review which is student led, inclusive and constantly evolving.**

### **Education: Decolonising the Curriculum**

Students voted for this heading as a response to our ongoing campaign to consider issues of decoloniality in the School's Curriculum Review process, which we believe will make our courses more relevant and improve diversity issues within SOAS. We want a systematic review process to consider and respond to how traditionally marginalised voices are underrepresented with the curriculum. This exclusion of voices and perspectives means that core issues of concern around race, disability, gender, sexuality and class amongst others are neglected and that teaching at SOAS fails to engage fully with a rich body of academic work which engages in non-normative forms of knowledge. We want SOAS to work with the Students' Union to develop a process as part of the Curriculum Review which will include an Equality Impact Assessment on each of our units and systematically suggest improvements to the curriculum

**KPI: That a decoloniality procedure has been agreed and implemented as part of the curriculum review and that 50% of the curriculum has been reviewed**

### **Employability**

This area is of concern to SOAS students who see their courses as less vocational than other University courses. It is also a response to overall fears in the sector around skills and opportunity for employment. The Students' Union will work closely with the Careers Service to develop operational activities to prepare students for further work and study and in particular focusing on equalities in employment; supporting marginalised students in accessing employment. We will also campaign for the School to increase work placement/study abroad opportunities, and the Students' Union will provide more SU society training/volunteering opportunities.

**KPI: Improvement of employability statistics over the next five years as demonstrated by the DHLE stats.**

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## **Welfare: Mental Health**

In a recent NUS Survey 77% of students reported that they had had issues with their Mental Health over the past year. The Students' Union has seen an increase in awareness and reporting of mental health issues, and believe that SOAS (along with other HEI's) must be proactive as well as reactive in providing mental health services. We feel the School's current counselling provision is stretched, and the Disability and Advice and Wellbeing Team are stretched to provide services (and will be under extra pressure after the move to the North Block). Operationally the SU will look at ways it can partner with the School and external organisations to relieve this pressure (such as Mental health First Aid training for front-line staff), but believe that increased resourcing in this area is the only way can SOAS hope to keep up with demand and work proactively to support students with mental distress.

**KPI: Significant (£50K p.a. By 2019) improvement in School spend on mental health issues.**

## **Welfare: Accommodation**

SOAS Students have the lowest satisfaction rating in the International Student Barometer for accommodation, and in voting for this heading have underlined how important proper support for accommodation is at SOAS. We welcome the employment of the Student Advisor: Housing, but note that this role is split between housing and administering hardship funds. SOAS needs to secure more bed spaces in halls, support for students in private accommodation, extend the guarantor scheme and have a joined up accommodation strategy which considers affordability and accessibility for accommodation for all students.

**KPI: Increase in bed spaces secured by SOAS for students to 1800 by 2019 (70% in "affordable" price range < £160 per week).**

## **Welfare: Financial Support**

The majority of students are graduating with significant debt, and London is one of the most expensive cities in the world to live in. Most students have to work in term time to get by and a large proportion get into financial difficulties during their time as students. SOAS students want to see an improvement in financial support, from hardship loans, fee waivers, grants for students from low income backgrounds and access to further financial and budgetary training. In particular SOAS needs to develop a cohesive financial support strategy.

**KPI: SOAS has developed a Financial Support Strategy and increases its commitment to financial support by £100,000 p.a. by 2019.**