

# Emergency UGM

## 22 March 2019, 5-6pm, JCR

**“To oppose redundancies, save exams, prevent a strike”**

Chair: Ilyas Nagdee, NUS Black Students’ Officer  
Deputy Chair: Soph Bennett, Co-President Activities & Events

**Note 1: due to the SU Sustainability, Governance and Communications Co-ordinator being on leave this day, we paid Renugaa Raveen, a student, to help us minute proceedings.**

**Note 2: *[Red italics in square brackets]* are clarifications from the Co-President Democracy & Education.**

### Agenda to be discussed for UGM

1. Ground rules and introduction
2. Emergency motion: **“To oppose redundancies, save exams, prevent a strike”**

### Statement from Hau-Yu, Co-President Democracy & Education

- Due to having co-wrote and co-signed the EUGM motion, as well as facilitating this EUGM to happen at all, Hau-Yu vacates the Deputy Chairship of this UGM as it would comprise a conflict of interest.
- The EUGM will therefore be deputy chaired by Soph Bennett.
- An emergency UGM was called on Tuesday evening, to be debated with 3 days’ notice, hence the EUGM happening today.
- SU is drafting a response email to Paula Sanderson (Registrar) and Prof Stephen Hopgood (Pro-Director International) email that was sent out to all students titled “One Professional Service - improving services to students”. This is in regard to their misleading information about the OPS restructuring.

### 1. Ground rules and introduction

- Set forth by the Chair:
- Limited to 2 mins per person to state their points for or against the motion
- Limited to 1 min per person for proposed amendments
- Points of Information (POI): are reserved to ask for facts

### 2. Emergency motion: to oppose redundancies, save exams, prevent a strike

Proposer: Siddharth Chakravarty

- Possibility of strike happening during Term 3 (23<sup>rd</sup> April) when students are having exams
- Do not want a strike but need to stand with the staff
- SOAS needs to be restructured differently, student experience should not come at the expense of workers and staff

- Motion: to oppose redundancies, save exams and prevent a strike

No POIs were asked.

The Chair went on to address amendments to the motion:

---

#### Amendment #1:

Point 2.2: That no compulsory **or optional** redundancies should be made as a result of the OPS restructure.

- Need to add the point of 'optional' as staff are pushed to this option by lowering their, alternatives ways of making staff redundant *[i.e. we have seen in this restructure how some staff have been matched to a position which can be a lower grade to the one they currently work. Therefore though there are "no planned compulsory redundancies" from Senior Management, the restructure will leave some staff with no option but to leave].*

No clarifications or POI made.

No one is against the amendment

Vote on amendment: **Amendment passes!**

---

#### Amendment #2:

Proposal to add this point 3.5: **This union is against the project of privatisation and marketisation of student education**

POI: How would this be implemented at the national level? Are there any specific actions you have in mind or do you just want this to be placed wider context?

Response: There is a need for communication with other universities such as Goldsmiths, who might be undergoing the same problems

Speech against amendment: It might be better to have this as a different motion or as an issue for further issue for the upcoming UGM in Term 3, as this current UGM is directed specifically towards management.

Vote on amendment: **Amendment fails.**

---

### Amendment #3:

To include the following in either point 3.1 or 3.2 – **to force management to reopen the matching process equally and to ensure that the heads of department are consulted in this process.**

POI: To clarify what is the matching process?

Clarification: all the OPS staff are supposed to be matched exactly to the new structure *[clarification: staff who have a 70% match between their current job, and a restructured role, will be matched. Currently Management say 200 staff have been matched to posts, however at Wednesday 20 March it was noted that 109 staff had not been matched.]* However, in the new structure, there is extensive change. Instead of permanent positions being given a permanent job in the new process, you might get down-graded or left unmatched.

POI: It is a strong point to add this amendment. It is also important to inform that there is a gendered dimension to the matching processes. In the current matching process, men with the same role have been matched whereas the women have been left out *[SU are seeking more clarity on this statement]*.

POI: This is with regards to the email sent out by the management which states that there's more people being hired, whereas the opposite is being said here. Could you please tell us what's the exact situation?

Response from Deputy Chair: In the email sent, there is a glaring omission of what's exactly been told to the students vs what's been told to the staff. The trade unions have not been consulted with this process and the students are in support with the union. There will be a comprehensive email sent in reply to the email sent by the management.

Vote on amendment: **Amendment passes!**

---

### Amendment #4:

Point 3.1: To support academic and professional services staff in their opposition against the proposed cuts by the OPS project. **The Union resolves to have a vote of no confidence in the senior management to manage this process, and the process is to be re-opened after consultation with the unions.**

POI: Does the vote of no confidence actually have any power?

Response: Yes

POI: How can we actionize the vote of no confidence?

Response from Chair and Deputy Chair: It is a statement issued by the students of this institution that the students have no confidence in the way the process is managed.

POI: How will this vote of confidence be different from Point 3.3?

Response: This is different from publicly condemning as it is a much stronger course of action, sends a stronger message and is in line with the other unions.

POI: Can you please name all the management?

Response from Deputy Chair: They consist mainly of the Director, the 4 Pro-directors who over-see and manage the entire school [*N.B. actually, despite what was said in the UGM, there are 3, see [here](#)*], and the next level staff such as the head of estates, head of legal, head of finance etc [*see [here](#)*].

POI: Can the vote of no confidence be weaponized by the management? Can they turn against us and say that they can't solve the problem since we have no confidence in them?

Response from member: No, they will not do that as all their actions so far has been phrased as improvements to the student experience and to reject this is the strongest way to do act against that and to show management that they need to stop using students as justification for things without consulting with them.

Vote on amendment: **some abstains, amendment passes!**

---

#### [Amendment #5:](#)

Point 2.2: That no compulsory **or optional** redundancies should be made as a result of the OPS restructure and **the union is against pay cuts or the changing of permanent positions into temporary positions because of the matching process.**

Clarification: No staff should have their salary cut or have their positions changed from full time (permanent staff are staff who have been employed for more than 2 years) to part time.

Vote on amendment: **Amendment passes!**

---

#### [Amendment #6:](#)

Point 2.4: That the sole responsibility for the dire financial situation SOAS is currently suffering is the senior management team of the university, and therefore staff **(not management)** and students should not experience the harsher consequences of the measures to be taken to solve the situation

Vote on amendment: **Amendment passes as 2.4!**

---

#### [Amendment #7:](#)

Point: **There should be less cuts to specialised depts and this union believes SOAS has a duty to protect specialised departments such as languages, regional centres, African studies.**

POI: There is unfair cuts to departments, some departments such as the African studies department or the SOAS library has to endure severe cuts. There should be equal cuts across all departments.

Speech against: It is not plausible to have proportionate cuts across all departments, as not all depts have the same value and there is a danger in making this too broad, this is actually about the professionals and staffs, should this point be raised under a separate meeting?

Response: Both issues are related as disproportionate cuts to certain departments is related to loss in jobs.

Vote on amendment: **Amendment passes as 2.5!**

---

#### **Amendment #8:**

Point 3.4: To support industrial action by both trade unions (UCU and UNISON) in the event of compulsory redundancies being given to any member(s) of staff at SOAS. **UCU and Union will speak to other unions on campus and students to develop a collaborative support on the ground.**

POI: Will this collaborative support extend to students in the event that this might result in them not being able to graduate or take their exams because of their support for this industrial action?

Response: Collaboration means coming together, yes support extends to meaning support for students.

POI: Someone losing their job is more important to me than graduating

Vote on amendment: **Amendment fails!**

---

#### **Amendment #9:**

Point 2.3: That students have the power to put pressure on management in order to push for an agreement in which staff voices and interests are centred in these conversations, and therefore avoid the need for industrial action. **The Union believes that senior management and students should enter dialogue before processes.**

POI: There already has been dialogue, and it did not work. Dialogues dilute the situation and it will not work.

Vote on amendment: **Amendment fails!**

---

**Amendment #10:**

Point 3.4: To support industrial action by ~~both or~~ trade unions (UCU and UNISON) in the event of compulsory redundancies being given to any member(s) of staff at SOAS.

Vote on amendment: **Amendment passes!**

---

**Vote on Motion: to oppose redundancies, save exams, prevent a strike**

Speech against motion:

There is inadequate knowledge and we do not know how to interpret the knowledge that that we are receiving, and there is danger in voting without a thorough awareness of the situation, and there is a need to clarify the information from management and information the union to reconcile the truth.

Clarification: The information you receive is the information that is coming from the trade union staff and the SU will stand by them.

Vote on motion: **Motion passes!**

---

Closing comments: The SU are holding an open all-students forum, following on from this passed policy, next Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March (time tbc).

The amended motion that has been passed:

#### UGM AGENDA

<b>Time:</b>	<b>17:00-18:00</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>22nd March 2019</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>JCR</b>
<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Ilyas Nagdee, NUS Black Students' Officer</b>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Renugaa Raveen 665941</b>
<b>Agenda</b> 1. <b>Ground rules and Introduction</b> 2. <b>Emergency motion: Oppose redundancies, save exams, prevent a strike</b>	

#### EMERGENCY UGM MOTION

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Oppose redundancies, save exams, prevent a strike</b>
<b>Proposer:</b>	<b>Siddharth Chakravarty - 554823</b>
<b>Seconder:</b>	<b>Nayon Ahmed - 648313</b>

**This Union Notes:**

**1.1 That the School is currently going through a process of financial and institutional restructuring under the One Professional Service (OPS) project.**

**1.2 That all current permanent staff were supposed to hear about their particular role in the new structure by Monday, 18th March 2019, and that at the time of writing, some staff members have still not received their outcome letters or had one-to-one meetings, while the ones who did were given such information later than what it was promised.**

**1.3 That both trade unions at SOAS (UNISON and UCU) consider that SOAS management have shown a complete and insulting disregard for the wellbeing of staff, enhanced by their lack of clarity and sensitivity when dealing with the OPS restructuring process, especially when it directly affects people's lives and jobs at its current stage**

**1.4 That there are high possibilities of compulsory redundancies happening according to the last information released by SOAS management, despite unions' firm opposition and previous indication that industrial action would be taken in such case.**

**1.5 That some, among many others, of the concerns raised by staff are linked to the following:**

**1.5.1 There's a prediction of 30-40 people being made redundant and losing their jobs;**

**1.5.2 109 permanent staff have not been "matched" in the new restructure, meaning that their current jobs do no longer exist in the current proposed structure and they have not been suggested another post to take over;**

**1.5.3 There is a concerning and unexplainable asymmetry with regards to the members of staff whose job descriptions have been matched in the new structure (e.g. 3 male members of staff in a department being "matched" in the new structure, while female staff are still waiting for an answer).**

**1.5.4 the Widening Participation team is proposed to merge with Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions, under the justification 'to align the Student Ambassador Schemes'. Despite prior agreement by Executive Board to propose WP merged with Centre for Innovation in Learning & Teaching (CILT), such concerning changes are being proposed, leading to WP staff "seeking [student] support in ensuring the department which drives change in access, student success, outcomes and progression is not relegated to a marketing and recruitment tool."**

**1.6 That the possibility of industrial action seems highly likely considering the current trajectory management is on, as they have acted recklessly by not entering into meaningful discussions with UNISON and staff members to resolve the situation.**

**1.7 That such industrial action, considering current legislation, would lead to staff strikes during exam period, which could then hinder students from sitting their exams and/or even graduating.**



**This Union Believes:**

**2.1 That the current proposed changes by the OPS restructuring project will have a huge and damaging effect on students and staff at our institution: loss of institutional knowledge, negative impact on staff morale, increase of administrative support burden on staff, worsening of student experience.**

**2.2 That no compulsory or optional redundancies should be made as a result of the OPS restructure**

**2.3 That students have the power to put pressure on management in order to push for an agreement in which staff voices and interests are centered in these conversations, and therefore avoid the need for industrial action.**

**2.4 That the sole responsibility for the dire financial situation SOAS is currently suffering is the senior management team of the university, and therefore staff (not management) and students should not experience the harsher consequences of the measures to be taken to solve the situation.**

**2.5 There should be less cuts to specialised depts and this union believes SOAS has a duty to protect specialised departments such as languages, regional centres, African studies.**

**This Union Resolves:**

**3.1 To support academic and professional services staff in their opposition against the proposed cuts by the OPS project.**

**3.2 That such support could take different forms depending on staff demands, but would be mainly targeted at putting pressure on SOAS management in order to avoid compulsory or optional redundancies, as well as measures that would worsen student and staff experiences and wellbeing at our institution. Furthermore this support could entail forcing management to reopen the matching process on a more equal basis for all staff and with genuine consultation with the trade unions (UNISON mainly, and UCU), and to ensure that the heads of department are consulted in this process.**

**3.3 To declare it has No Confidence in SOAS Senior Management. To publicly condemn SOAS Senior Management for their incompetence, and lack of transparency and respect in the restructuring process, by means of issuing a public letter in which they are held responsible for the current situation - therefore the burden of preventing industrial action rests with them.**

**3.4 To support industrial action by both or either trade unions (UNISON mainly, and UCU) in the event of compulsory or optional redundancies being given to any member(s) of staff at SOAS.**