

Covid-19 Critical Response Group Report 4

21st April 20

Anna Dodridge (General Manager)

Background & Context

Covid-19 has been declared a pandemic and a public health emergency. Last week the government confirmed a further 3 week extension to the 'lockdown' with any travel and movement restricted. There has been some discussion of an 'exit strategy', however it's clear that even if lockdown is lifted in 3 weeks time, we won't be returning to work in any 'business as usual' sense for some time yet. The Office of Budget Responsibility have predicted a 35% reduction in UK GDP for April – June, and their analysis has predicted a -90% reduction in output for Education, which is predicted to be the hardest hit sector. You can read further analysis in [this Guardian article](#). "Universities UK has warned that up to £6.9bn in fee income is at risk because of non-UK and non-EU students staying away this year..." UUK have put forward a list of measures to help HE survive C-19, and are [asking for billions of pounds of bailout support](#).

Since the previous report (8th April) we had a well needed long-weekend break for Easter, where SOAS & the Union closed completely, re-opening on 14th April.

Updates

Representation

We've continued to lead on campaigning on accommodation, with a focus on Sanctuary Students, with Valeria & Oscar putting in mountains of work in this area. The campaign has really taken off at a national level and students are taking this campaign forward. At this point Sanctuary Students have secured the release of students from contracts, and are now chasing for 'debts'.

Following a student petition, and growing push nationally, SOAS adopted a 'no-detriment policy'. Unfortunately SOAS shut out our representation, in particular Maxine and Nidah, and made bad decisions which have effected our PGT community. We've been collecting student views in order to lobby to change this policy so that it works for our PGT students.

SOAS are planning, across the 7 workstreams, for 3 scenarios.

- a) opening in September with blended delivery
- b) opening in October with blended delivery
- c) opening in January and only online delivery until then

We have officer representation in the most relevant workstreams, to look at the different aspects of these scenarios. These are also the scenarios that the Union therefore needs to have plans for.

Union Operations

Let's be honest, working remotely is taking its toll. I'm impressed that despite 2 months of seriously disrupted working conditions the team are still maintaining some motivation and we're able to offer a working Union for our members. We've launched the SOAS SU Quarantine Qrew, thanks to the hardwork of Peadar & Charli, and have a full week of virtual events lined up. This is our first real shift into delivering our student engagement remotely, and we wait to see what this looks like.

We have re-opened elections for the final 3 vacant part-time officer positions. We're working on our Green Impact submission which [REDACTED] are hoping that our lack of ability to work towards our award this year won't have too much of an effect on our excellent history of Green Impact awards.

I've had a couple of good meetings with SOAS following our paper to their Board of Trustees in relation to financial management and [REDACTED] support. This has set out the beginnings of some agreements of what we can expect from each other, and how we can turn around SOAS SU into a well functioning organization that may have some hope of surviving coronavirus.

Following the decision to put our commercial student staff on furlough leave I have written to them and confirmed this. They have [REDACTED] the arrangements. The response has actually been very positive with staff letting us know they feel we've been transparent, kept them up to date, and that they appreciate the support & commitment we've shown. There are a few questions about how the calculations on their hours are being done, and what they will individually be paid. Kai & I are putting together individual correspondence for each person, to confirm this information, which will be sent by the end of this week, before their first furlough leave pay packet.

Decisions

A reminder please that this is people's individual and personal situations and information about their pay. This paper is **confidential**.

We're working on trying to get together a budget re-forecast as soon as possible. A budget re-forecast requires [REDACTED]

1. Up to date accounts (all payments processed and entered onto our accounting system) – we are currently up to ???
2. Re-writing the annual budget so that it includes staff and commercial activity, at the moment it only includes our activity costs
3. Adjusting the budget in the light of the reduction of income from the commercial team, and looking at any other savings we have or can make for the rest of the year

We're getting some assistance from SOAS to do this task, because we don't have the internal capacity or skills to do this quickly.

Based on what is available from the membership (non-commercial) side of the Union my understanding is that we are within the budget we set at the beginning of the year, with underspend in some areas covering overspend in others. If it's at all possible to get to a budget surplus by the end of the year then that would help us with any potential (likely) cuts next year, however I think it's more realistic to aim for a break-even budget, because of the [REDACTED] the cost of the black student support coordinator we're paying out for things that aren't covered with any income (generated or through grant funding).

Not having a re-forecast budget it's difficult to give an accurate idea to you about how much money we have for the rest of the year. However, in order to make the most of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme we need to make decisions about Furloughing staff as soon as possible.

In making these decisions as Trustees you need to be thinking about risks (see our [risk register](#)) and how we might reduce or avoid them.

- Financial Risks
 - Cash Flow – running out of actual money in the bank account
 - Reserves – using up our reserves to cover the cash flow, and being liable for outstanding debts
- Reputational Risks
 - Acting consistently with our values
- Staffing Risks
 - De-motivating and/or losing long term & successful staff members

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Following decisions on 8th April I'm now asking the CRG to re-visit the decisions that were suspended

[Redacted]

Recommendation	Decision
The CJRS has been confirmed until the June 30 th , on this basis the 29 student staff currently on Furlough Leave should have this confirmed until June 26 th	[Redacted]
As the CJRS has been confirmed until June 30 th , student staff contract end dates are confirmed as June 26 th (extended end of Term 3)	
Bar Manager is placed on Furlough Leave until June 30 th	
Commercial Manager is placed on Furlough Leave until June 30 th	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]

In all 3 re-opening scenarios there is nothing that re-opens before September. We will also need to do careful planning to understand what impact blended learning may have on our commercial income, although this might be off-set by lower levels of student staff recruitment and purchasing. On this basis therefore we need to consider that there may be a gap of at least 3 months, and up to 7 months between the end of the CJRS and the re-opening of our commercial outlets.

Bar Manager

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Commercial Manager

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

It's my view that we need to consider furloughing other staff now in order to make it to a break-even budget, particularly if any decisions are made to top-up the BM and CM, and with the risk of our commercial services remaining closed beyond the end of the CJRS and beyond September.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]