



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

1st December 2020
11am - 1pm

Chair: Hasan Zakria

Agenda

1. Officer Check In
2. Enough is Enough
3. Mitigating Circumstances
4. January Rent Strike
5. Re-Freshers

Apologies: Sohane Yahya

In attendance: Hasan Zakria, Yasmin Elsouda, Roza Atac, Sabrina Shah, Lucia Pedroso, Oscar Ward, Katie Saunders, Victor Max Smith, Heleena Pankhurst, Ella Spencer, Josh Mock, Alex Allen, Sara Lloyd-Knibbs, Hisham Parchment, Emma Thackwray, Felix Henson

1. Officer Check In

Hasan: One word to describe how you feel going into the week and something you're working on right now.

Heleena: Okay. Setting up Black and PoC student meetings, and organising a Race & Disability event.

Ella: Good. Working on Preventing Prevent with Sabrina & Yasmin.

Sabrina: Good. Supporting on Preventing Prevent. Mitigating Circumstances - how to feedback to management and relevant people. Some SOAS Committees about teaching and learning, Trustee Board, working towards Academic Board.

Oscar: "Eh". End of term is close but still lots to go. Mental health check-ins going well - going to organise another. Had a good meeting with the SOAS Accommodation Manager last week.

Katie: Doing well. Working with Michael on a working class reading group.

Sara: Tired. Mature students Whatsapp group is good - up to 70 people! Had an okay social, and have organised a speed friending for later this week.

Lucia: Dealing with some students complaints, and speaking with the undergrad magazine to try and bring it back.

Victor: Angry. Been working with Trans Dignity to work on SOAS' trans* policy.

Roza: "Eh". Busy! Working on Enough is Enough, and finalising Disability History Month Event. Planning the next SAaW event for the first week of Christmas break. Working with the SU Radio Manager to get funding from Arts Council England. Lookin at running liberation through art workshops. Clements review steering group - working on report and support. Figuring out SU support for students who are staying in London over Christmas break, and find out how students' experiences in SOAS accommodation has been in term 1.

Hisham: Good. Term is moving quickly!

Josh: Busy. Lots of zoom meetings. Working on tonight's HIV AIDS session.

Alex: Good. Stressed because sports is back now that lockdown is ending but not getting the support we need to know what to do to start training again.

Yasmin: Good. BDS and Prevent work. Would love us as an SU team to go through Prevent training. Also currently working 12pm - 9pm because of the time difference for where I am right now.

Hasan: Alex - if you're free for a catch up later today / this week let me know so I can make sure you get supported for sports things. Launched a new series with Careers - 'An Introduction to ____' to look into different career paths. LGBT PoC social on Friday. Excited to see the results of Sara's mature Student survey.

Emma: Stressed. Sports start again tomorrow, and need support to get training going.

Felix: Ready. Deadlines are coming up and 2 upcoming DHM events are somewhat lagging for now. A couple of mix ups with DHM early on but things are going well now. Hosted a social yesterday and have started a disabled students chat.

2. Enough is Enough

Roza: We spoke with the EiE campaign following the open letter. We're organising online workshops for the start of term 2. Tight deadline to do this. We've been taking in applications for administrators, who will be supervisors and deal with EiE paperwork etc. We are interviewing and hiring this week. We're then going to hire facilitators for the workshops (been writing job descriptions, and looking to send ads out by the end of the week), and need to train the facilitators so that by the 1st/2nd week of January we have workshops ready. The EiE campaign has been working on making the EiE Moodle page more accessible - waiting to hear how many hours they think it will take to update this and then I'll show them how to edit and give them access.

3. Mitigating Circumstances

Sabrina: Seeing a lot of gaps in the new SOAS mitigating circumstances policy and how it applies to people. We held a meeting yesterday but if you have any experience with the policy or know anyone who has, we'd love feedback on the new policy: e.g. is it fit for policy? Is self certification working?

A discussion was had around how SOAS came to the new mitigating circumstances policy, and request for Exec to speak with any students they know to get feedback and date on the mitigating circumstances policy.

4. January Rent Strike

Yasmin: Other universities are organising rent strikes in January. SOAS is not as we organised one during the summer. It would be worth talking about what this means for term 2 and the marketisation of HE. Raising this as a political issue and educating students on what's going on.

Oscar: Manchester just won their rent strike but it involved an occupation and it should not have come to what it came to (e.g. putting up barriers). There's been a ramping up of over securitisation in university accommodation spaces. We should be looking at 50-60% rent reductions from rent strikes but students are taking less than this (e.g. 30%). It's important to have this conversation nationally so that students get what they deserve.

Yasmin: I have the capacity to bottom line this project. It would be good to think about what we want to do for this - e.g. video series to start conversations on Prevent, accommodation / gentrification, etc; and link it all to marketisation.

Lucia: Workshops and a documentary video series sounds good. These rent strikes feel like the beginning of a wave - if we try to frame the issue about something bigger than just accommodation and rent then this will be successful. Do we want to include other SUs too?

Yasmin: NUS could send comms out for us to other SUs they have the contact information for and we can speak with other SUs we know. However it can be a bit clique-y with SUs as some campus based SUs find it easy to reach their students so don't engage wider

Sara: Can students break or alter their SOAS accom contract given that the next term is online still?

Oscar: SOAS has multiple contracts and providers so it depends. Dinwiddy and Paul Robeson (sanctuary students) have a 1 in 1 out policy - you have to find a replacement tenant to break your contract. The work in finding the replacement is on the student. Other accommodation providers are different - you have notice periods to move out. You have to look at the individual circumstances to know, and SOAS' Accommodation Manager knows all of the different policies.

5. Re-Freshers

Hasan: In Freshers we had 100 events but an issue was enrollment was late and our mailing lists weren't very large so we were unable to reach lots of students. That affected society sign ups. I want to advertise Re-Freshers to societies as a recruitment drive to boost morale. There's still a lot of students who don't know a lot about societies and how to join. I just need to check Term 2 dates, and will invite societies to put on events. Work with Jack to advertise societies. In Freshers societies and sports had Teams channels in a Freshers space. We'll likely replicate that for Re-Freshers. Also want to invite all exec officers to host events during this time!

Sara: Common theme in feedback - although people like emails to receive information but it's often too overwhelming. Can we shorten our emails?

Hasan: I'll speak with Jack. I see the emails as you can see the list of events at the top of the email and then you scroll down to any relevant events.

Discussed the pros and cons of the SU emails.

Jack to plan a comms meeting with Exec to discuss what we do and the challenges in moving forward.

6. AOB

Mature Students Survey

Sara ran through the results of the mature students she recently ran. Overview:

- Ran for 1 week
- 52 responses
- Mostly PGT / PGR
- 58% of respondents were over 30 years old
- 75% of people have been out of education for over 4 years
- Mature students have lots of other commitments (e.g. work and caring)
- People think being a mature student affects them academically and non academically
- $\frac{3}{4}$ mature students haven't studied with SOAS before
- Mature students care a lot about professional outcomes and feel more pressure to get a job after study
- Email comms is preferred
- 51% want academic writing support
- 38% want mental health support

SU By-Election

Sabrina: In the last exec meeting we voted to hold a by-election to elect PGR Officer and a new Environment Officer. Jack organised this - nominations were open all of last week, closing monday morning. We've had 4 nominations for PGR officer (which is amazing!) and 1 for Environment officer. Voting will be happening tomorrow 9am - 5pm via the SU Elections webpage. Please vote and tell people you know to vote!!

Jack to send out Doodle Poll for one final Exec meeting this year