



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

2nd March 2021
12pm - 2pm

Chair: Sabrina Shah

Agenda

1. Officer Check In
2. Relationship Agreement
3. UGM
4. Meeting with Adam Habib
5. AOB

Apologies: Emma Thackwray

In attendance: Sabrina Shah, Yasmin Elsouda, Oscar Ward, Lucia Pedroso, Sara Lloyd-Knibbs, Hasan Zakria, Ella Spencer, Sohane Yahya, Roza Atac, Victor Max Smith, Josh Mock

1. Officer Check In

[Recording of the meeting began after the Officer Check In]

Emma (via email): With the recent announcement, we're super excited that we'll be starting up outdoor sport again from the 29th of March. In addition, we'll be starting up the "Stay at Home Sports Challenge" one year on from the first one, starting April 6th (or the closest Monday). So that'll hopefully be a few pre-recorded workouts, and then a live-workout once a week (probably on zoom rather than Instagram live).

2. Relationship Agreement

Sabrina: The relationship agreement is kind of a formalised understanding of the Union's relationship with the School, so that we can do what we want and they'll be okay with that and recognise we're here to hold them to account and advocate for students.

Anna: We've set up a mini working group with the relevant people in the School that we work closely with to establish a core document of what everyone's responsibilities are, and what the principles are of how we work together. The relationship agreement is very much about bigger picture items such as value and behaviours, and underneath this are sub-agreements such as financial memorandums, estates, IT, payroll, etc.

Yasmin: Every SU and University has a relationship agreement. We currently don't have one as our Union evolved perhaps more organically than others, but it's good to establish what our relationship is and how we work together. This agreement will stop issues such as the School attempting to undermine the position of the Union as student body representatives in meetings by setting out a standard of our relationships and purposes.

Anna: Having been through this process in other Unions, the key part of this process is not the document itself but the process of getting there - identifying existing misunderstandings between the School and the Union and seeing what needs to be fixed/improved.

Anna ran through the draft SOAS/SU Relationship Agreement.

Oscar: It would be nice to see in the relationship agreement the School accepting the legitimacy of the Union in representing the student voice.

3. UGM

Lucia: I have some feedback from myself and others from the first online UGM:

- (1) Webinar: Didn't allow you to interact openly with other students, discussing the points of the meeting
- (2) Chair: I think the Chair should be selected by the Exec Committee
- (3) Seconders: Seconders didn't get an opportunity to talk
- (4) Discussion: I think it's important to record UGMs to share the discussions had when people vote

I also want to suggest we start thinking about the next UGM date.

Anna: The issue with recording is that we need consent from everyone attending, so it was a practical issue about why we didn't do it this time. We can definitely look into this next time. It's difficult if people don't want to be recorded then we'd have to tell them they can't take part in the UGM.

The Chair should be voted on by the Trustee Board.

For the format of the meeting, we'll need to speak with Jack. We've been trying to replicate what is directed in the schedule/constitution.

The decision to hold a webinar was made as it ensured safety as well as possible, as an open discussion would be difficult to monitor and ensure safety.

Lucia: Maybe we could host the UGM as a normal Zoom call next time, and have someone as a regulator for the chat.

Sabrina: Me and Jack are hoping to have a meeting with you all to discuss improvements for the next UGM. In terms of the Chair, we had a Chair confirmed that I was going to bring to Trustees before the UGM for approval but they cancelled at the last minute and unfortunately I had to scramble to find someone. For the next meeting I will bring the Chair to the Trustees for approval beforehand.

Sara: Some practical suggestions:

- (1) Normal Zoom call or different alternative
- (2) UGM Exec working group
- (3) Encourage proposers and seconders to speak with Exec about their motion before so we can check some of their things from a governance point of view, as lots of our conversations in the UGM ended up being about governance
- (4) We could put up clips of the overall recording, just showing the specific motion

Sabrina: On the point of coming to Exec: Myself and Jack invited all motion proposers to speak with us beforehand, so this already exists. The reason we don't involve Exec in the logistics of meetings (e.g. monitoring chats) is because Exec are students and are directly involved in the meeting - it's easier for SU staff / sabbs to moderate

Yasmin: The UGM spaces should be for community building and consensus decision making, and there should be more space for these discussions.

Anna: We need staff to look after certain points around democracy to keep things neutral and separate to people involved in the voting. In terms of shaping motions the meeting with Jack is important, and we couldn't take this to Exec for a meeting as there will be a perceived bias around Exec attempting to make people change their proposals. I also feel there were questions in UGM between Exec that should've happened before that meeting, e.g. questioning the constitution. These questions can make students question our legitimacy and get caught up in conversations about bureaucracy instead of the motions themselves.

Lucia: I think UGMs should have a sense of community building and that was lost in a webinar setting.

Anna: The Chair is a challenge as they have to be independent. Jack did lots of training with our Chair, but the reality of understanding the processes we have around UGMs is difficult. This was even a problem last year using a consistent Chair. UGMs should be about students making decisions together.

Sabrina: It's also best to keep the Chair as external to SOAS as possible, as ex-Sabbs from SOAS are too close to the things we would be discussing.

4. Meeting with Adam Habib

Sabrina: I'll be sending out a Doodle Poll to find dates we're all free to meet with Adam to discuss his strategic plan. Also there's currently a governance review taking place at SOAS and I've been asked to be the student representative on the panel. I'm looking at which organisation we'll use for the governance review, and one of the organisations I like explicitly mentions the SU and speaking to Exec.

5. AOB

Israeli Apartheid Week

Yasmin: Want to confirm what we want to do as a Union for this - perhaps a statement addressing some of the ways Palestinian solidarity is being criminalised.

Lucia: Happy to support Pal Soc with anything they want to do, and I think we should send a statement as the SU during this week.

A discussion was had about the plans for the week, support needed, and the demands to be brought to the School.

Mental Health Day

Hasan: Last year the mental health society had a useful booklet of information for students. They've not re-registered this year. I'm going to call out for people to attend an event to rebuild this society.

Yamin: I'd like to help write the statement for this