



# Executive Committee Reports

Union General Meeting

February 22nd 2021

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## Sabbatical Officers

Name (Position)	Report
<p><b>Hasan Zakria</b> (Activities &amp; Events)</p>	<p>Despite the limitations of working in events during a Pandemic, there are many things that I am quite proud of this year! Here's just a few: Firstly, Speedfriending was an initiative created to combat loneliness amongst the student body, which ran weekly for Term 1 and the start of Term 2. The feedback included 70% of attendees leaving with someone's contact details, and 100% saying they would return for another session. The feedback I am most proud of is that many students cited the positive impacts the event had on their mental health, and how it boosted their confidence in interacting with strangers!</p> <p>Freshers and Re-Freshers is another thing I am quite proud of, and a huge shout-out to all the societies who participated, as it wouldn't have been possible without them. Without much guidance on how to do Freshers virtually, and without the money/resources that other universities had, I was glad to have been able to work with Jack (Communications Officers) to create an online platform on Microsoft Teams for the Freshers Fayre, and facilitate over 100 events in the space of 14 days!</p> <p>Additionally, being able to work with fellow SU exec officers on Liberation History Months, has been an enjoyable experience- and I am proud of the offering of events we were able to provide. I am most proud of LGBTQIA+ History Month, as I have been able to provide a platform for the Pioneers of the New York Ballroom Scene so they can share their story, and history. Additionally, my upcoming event LGBTQIA+ Stories aimed at those students who are in the closet, questioning their identity, or simply insecure about their sexuality- is another event I am very proud of. This event is something I would have benefitted from as someone who was in the closet for most of their life, and I am hopeful this event will be impactful.</p>

	<p>Furthermore, the Blind Dates I hosted for Valentine's Day completely blew me away in terms of the feedback. I wanted to do something fun and bring some joy to people's day and based on the feedback, I achieved that! I fully expect weddings as a result of this event. All I wanted to do when I ran for this role was to bring some joy to people's lives, and the feedback from this event was a nice thing to wake up to, after an exhausting/demoralising year working in events during a pandemic!</p> <p>Ultimately, whilst I will never be fully satisfied with what I have achieved this year, it's taken me many months to stop feeling so guilty and recognise the limitations placed on me as a result of being in a pandemic. And in the end, I am proud of what I was able to offer to students and hope that in future years, people look to my manifesto for inspiration when running for my role. As self-expression, personal development, liberation, and JOY should in my view be centred in the work of the Co-President of Activities and Events.</p>
<p><b>Sabrina Shah</b> (Democracy &amp; Education)</p>	<p>Since the beginning of Term 2, we had to respond to the 3rd national lockdown and find the areas that students needed the most support with. The student reps and wider student community were incredibly mobilised and I received lots of feedback regarding the mitigating circumstances and no detriment policy and what needed to change (such as unlimited self-certification and further PGT provisions). We are still working on getting further provisions in place from students but I have been working very closely with our academic affairs officer, Lucia on this and we hope to have some updates very soon. I have also been assisting Yasmin (Welfare &amp; Campaigns) with SOASWTFees in ensuring that we engage with the national debate around free, decolonised education as well as ensuring our students are supported in their fee strike and in their demands to management for better teaching and learning provisions, as was promised in Summer 2020.</p> <p>I have been working with Jack to bring you all our first ever online UGM! Jack has worked really hard to make it all work seamlessly so make sure you let us know how we did afterwards, we would love to hear your feedback and see where we can improve the process for our next one in Term 3! (Don't forget to nominate yourself for our Spring elections!!).</p> <p>This week we are rolling out our first Preventing Prevent workshop for student reps with the hope of extending this to the wider student body. We have also ensured that the new Director engages with the student community on his new strategic plan and will be facilitating the meetings he is having with student reps this week. A longer term project</p>

	<p>until the end of my term, is the school-wide governance review. I am the student representative on the panel to ensure that our decision making structures at SOAS are far more accessible and transparent so that the student community can be more involved and can hold the school accountable more effectively and constructively.</p> <p>I wanted to give a huge shout out to our student reps who have been working tirelessly to get things done and make change even when they are going through their own personal struggles and difficulties.</p>
<p><b>Roza Atac</b> (Equality &amp; Liberation)</p>	<p>This year has been and continues to be a constant uphill battle filled with tosses and turns at every corner. We started in what was probably the most uncertain time for this institution. Our induction happened in the throes of T&amp;C, term 1 thus consisted in part of getting back on our feet after such a massive change. We also were faced with the duty of having to plan events and support without knowing when and if we'd be able to come back to campus.</p> <p>I am happy to say that although we had to majorly adapt and learn how to master new platforms we have been able to continue and fight for our community, offer care and support, and hopefully provide opportunities for relief and escape. Although this pandemic is a tragedy I believe lessons are being learned, processes are being adapted and we can hopefully emerge with a more inclusive institution.</p> <p>In term 1, Yasmin and I worked on the schools new SGBV (Sexual and Gender based violence) policy. We consulted on the policy, this included pushing for as exhaustive a list of definitions as possible (for example making sure Grooming was clearly defined), we consulted with various students under an extremely short timeline. This was crucial in helping us identify the need for more gender neutral language. We have now gotten to a point where the policy has been rolled out, thus we have been thinking about implementation. In my opinion the battle for a safe campus remains as the implementation is as important as the actual policy.</p> <p>Supporting the Enough is Enough campaign has been a major project for me. As you may have noticed the consent workshops happened in term 2 rather than during freshers week as they usually would. Unfortunately we were unable to adapt the content to an engaging format for zoom so we decided we would at least try to create some information for students. Yasmin and I worked with Anna (the SU general manager) on creating a moodle page which we launched in early October. In November we began organizing with the campaign so as to ensure workshops in term 2, administrators and facilitators were hired and trained, and a lot of work was put in to adapt the content and make it as engaging as possible. The moodle page was also revamped</p>

so as to be more accessible. Starting in January we held multiple workshops every Friday for 4 weeks and a final intensive week. All in all new soas students had a 5 week window of opportunity to access the consent workshops.

For the past 5 years the workshops have been funded by the school through an agreement. We have now arrived at the end of that agreement so now we are beginning the work of requesting more funding. We also need a firm commitment from the school and actual help if we wish to see the campaign grow. This is why I have been working on trying to create a steering committee with the campaign, the student's union and the school. The content and delivery would remain peer led however the school would be able to relieve us of the mess that is admin. This would also ensure a structure that will remain whether specific individuals are a part of the work or not, and allow us to properly plan the workshops rather than stress and have to rush. If we want statical change in the rates of SGBV on campus the school needs to prove the commitment it made in the policy to Enough is Enough.

Mental health has been one of the biggest challenges this year. University is already a time of great changes, stress and anxiety; add onto that a pandemic, an extremely uncertain/volatile job market, general uncertainty and you've got yourself a recipe for disaster.

To try and mitigate this I've taken on a couple endeavours. I have been working closely with SAaW (Student Advice and Wellbeing) ensuring we are aware of what is going on in the service, supporting students, organising events, just generally trying to collaborate and provide mutual support so those who need it can access support.

I have been working with Oscar, our accommodations officer, members from the chaplaincy and a mental health counselor, with the goal of creating a safe space where we can discuss mental health and Wellbeing. Our first session in november was focussed on the theme of Loneliness and Connectedness under Covid-19; in January we had our second session on the theme of anxiety. This time however we had workshops led by students, we were given an intro to meditation, a workshop on managing your anxiety by the British Red Cross society and we had a discussion on substance abuse facilitated by Oscar.

I also had the pleasure of hosting an event on mental health in the Kurdish community as part of disability history month, it was a beautiful space where we were able to discuss the stigma surrounding mental health and begin our journey of healing together.

I am passionate about de-stigmatizing mental illness and giving people the language to identify and express their feelings. Mental Well-being is too often expressed in heavily westernized frameworks, scaring off the people who need help the most. I hope to work with the International students

	<p>Mental Health counsellor to create information and give students (especially those from marginalized communities) the opportunity to understand that that back pain you've been complaining about for a while is actually your mind and body screaming for help (in many cultures mental unease is expressed in terms of physical ailments)</p> <p>I am currently working with Sabrina, Yasmin, Anna and Lucia (our Black Students Support Coordinator) to try and secure funding for the role through the Access and Participation Plan. I am also working with the Not the Only one (who offer survivor support groups and survivor specific consent workshops) towards the same goal. Previously Survivor work has been funded through the grant we received for Enough is Enough, this means currently we are only able to finance one support group, by doing this I hope to be able to expand the work of NTOO.</p> <p>For me personally this year has been incredibly difficult. Not being able to have any contact with the student body has been a huge mental strain for all of us in the Student's Union. So far I've felt more like a firefighter than a Sabbatical officer, it has been hard to plan anything when we need to deal with constant crises.</p> <p>Not being able to fulfil my manifesto has been extremely distressing, which was written in early March before the dumpster fire we call 2020 REALLY kicked in. At that time I had so many dreams of where I saw this Union going, excitement for all the community organizing I would be taking part in, the good times that would be spent with students and my fellow SU staff and officers. Unfortunately when most of your time ends up having to be dedicated to trying to predict what restrictions the government is going to enact for Uni's; supporting students through loss of income, not knowing whether or not to come back to London, the general fear of being exposed to Covid; and trying to support individuals when it feels like nothing can be done fulfilling your manifesto promises becomes a battle.</p>
<p><b>Yasmin Elsouda</b> (Welfare &amp; Campaigns)</p>	<p>Since the start of this term we quickly acknowledged we have to move quickly and organise for what students need during a third national lockdown, we have since had a number of open meetings, many chats with different students and a student led campaign SOAS WTFees has emerged. There are now dozens of students on fee strike and it is all thanks to amazing students coming together to fight for an education that is centred around their needs and the needs of the community. We have also been supporting the work different campaigns, the cleaners demand for their Rota to be adopted to keep the community safe, casualised teaching staff organising as Fractionals for Fair Play launched their collective grievance on the day of the walkout, and we will be delivering the first Preventing Prevent workshop to students tomorrow (Tuesday!)</p>

	<p>I have also been supporting students with everything from Mit Circs, accessing welfare support and hardship funds, visa and accommodation issues and complaints against the school.</p> <p>On the institutional side we have been working really hard to make sure SOAS effectively consult with students on their new strategic vision project which has been set in motion by the arrival of new director Adam Habib.</p> <p>Finally I'm very excited for Israeli Apartheid Week coming up this term on the week of the 15th to the 20th of March, keep an eye out for emails and social media!</p>
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## Executive Officers

Name (Position)	Report
<p><b>Lucia Pedroso</b> (Academic Affairs Officer)</p>	<p>Hola! This year has been particularly difficult to all of us. As Academic Affairs Officer there were many things I wanted to do to enhance our experience here in SOAS but due to the current circumstances we find ourselves in I have mainly focused on helping students cope with the pandemic.</p> <p>Currently I am holding weekly drop-in sessions in which most of the queries students have had revolve around mitigating circumstances so I became involved with a working group of academic and administrative staff to try and expand the current scope of this policy. This discussion is on-going so I hope by the time of the UGM I can provide you with some positive updates! Also, I have become involved with the SOASWTFees campaign, which is demanding SOAS steps up its students' support during the pandemic. So far we got a response from Adam Habib to continue discussing this issue further.</p> <p>In a non-pandemic related note I have organised some events for our liberation history months, attended several forums across the school to tackle some of the issues that affect our academic lives and worked alongside reps to get students' feedback. If you have any queries or comments about the Academic Affairs Role I'm one email away, so please get in contact (<a href="mailto:academic@soas.ac.uk">academic@soas.ac.uk</a>).</p> <p>Thank you for coping with me and I hope these next few months we have left of this academic year are a bit gentler</p>

	on us.
<p><b>Oscar Ward</b> (Accommodation Officer)</p>	<p>Since my last report the ongoing housing crisis at SOAS has worsened, not only due to the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns here in the UK but also inaction of the university to help students who are facing difficulties. The institution has seemed to have learned nothing from last year and yet again there are hundreds of students contractually obliged to pay rent in houses they do not occupy. I have been working on and supporting both the rent strike from 2019-2020 and also the new strike that has recently been declared, comprised of SOAS students from Dinwiddy and Paul Robeson. The Union stands in full solidarity with these students and we will try our best to do everything to support them. I have also been attending exec and trustee board meetings and helping the SU wherever I can. I strongly recommend to anybody reading this to run for accommodation officer in the upcoming elections as this year will be my last in the role, and it has been a great time working with such a capable team</p>
<p><b>Sohane Yahya &amp; Hisham Parchment</b> (Anti-Racism Officers)</p>	<p>Hi guys! Hisham and Sohane here!</p> <p>Thank you for all the support during BHM and the beginning of this crazy virtual year.</p> <p>We realize that these times have been incredibly hard for a lot of us, and so we're very grateful for everyone that still manages to engage and show up for everything we organize.</p> <p>We are attempting to become much more active with our Socials → Please send us an email or contact us if there is anything you think would be useful for us to share, or organize. We have an idea for a segment called race and bake, where multiple people could meet up to bake and discuss the importance of race in our lives at SOAS.</p> <p>Please keep emailing and sending us questions, tell us what we can do to help you have a better and safer experience at SOAS, but also how we can make virtual life easier.</p> <p><b>What we've done so far</b></p> <p><b>BHM</b></p> <p>We organized numerous fun social events for BHM and a social media campaign. Check our insta for more info on what we've done.</p> <p><b>The Robeson</b></p> <p>The Robeson has been in full swing. The submission time for the first edition has now closed. But do get in touch if you feel you would want to contribute in any way.</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Student of Color Visibility Week</b></p> <p>We're in the middle of planning an entire week dedicated to making students of color hyper visible at SOAS. We'll be working with a few societies to do this and are hoping to hold different social events every day that week. They would range from Movie screenings to Games night. We're also hoping to be able to host some workshops on healing for Black students.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ella Spencer</b> (Campaigns Officer)</p>	<p>This term I have mainly been working with Justice For Workers to pressure management into implementing their version of the rota, which ensures a safe environment for those on campus and safe and dignified working conditions for the cleaners' themselves. We had an email storm campaign (the joys of online organising) and are now escalating to requesting a meeting with management as they have not responded to the concerns of the community.</p> <p>I have also been working alongside Yasmin with the new SOASWTFees campaign to organise a fee strike in response to SOAS' handling of the pandemic and the wider crisis of marketised &amp; privatised higher education in the UK. The demands outline students' needs for greater academic mitigation measures and call for SOAS to lobby the government to reverse privatisation measures. Lastly I have been following up on the work of Trans* Dignity over the last year to bring in Spectra, an external and expert organisation, to provide counselling for trans and nonbinary students at SOAS, but the pandemic has meant that the campaign has limited capacity this year. This term I intend to arrange a meeting with Spectra once they have met with Student Advice and Wellbeing to work out the details of the service they will be providing.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Felix Henson</b> (Disabled Students &amp; Carers Officer)</p>	<p>Since my election, I have run a survey of students' experience of the accessibility of online learning, I have organised and coordinated a significant number of events for Disability History Month, created a Disabled Students Society, run Zoom socials for disabled students every Monday, worked with the Disability and Neurodiversity Team on creating training for accommodation and inclusion at the university, as well as providing support for a number of students individually. Of our manifesto, we have achieved four of our stated aims in spite of the pandemic.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sara Llyod-Knibbs</b> (Mature Students' Officer)</p>	<p>Hi Everyone! I've been pretty busy since I was elected on 23rd October 2020, here's what I've been up to so far:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Mature Students Survey</b></p> <p>As promised in my manifesto, I started my term of office by conducting a Mature Students Survey in November to find out more about this group's needs and concerns. Over 50 Mature Students kindly took part in it, providing lots of data to inform advocacy. Results were collated into a PowerPoint which I formally presented to the SU Executive Committee</p>

and NSSWWG (a group of university staff from across several departments of SOAS).

I also created a 2-page summary, and circulated it to all SOAS academic departments and other stakeholders (i.e. Chaplaincy Team; Student Feedback Panel; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EQI) Network).

## **2. Fostering [Online] Communities**

I entered this role keen to try and foster a sense of community amongst Mature Students, which is challenging to do in a remote learning context, but not impossible. I'm pleased to report that the SOAS Mature Students Group I set up now has around 130 members, many of whom are active, and there is also a quieter Facebook Group, which I hope will grow more in the future. After working with Student Parents as a specific demographic (see more below) I also recently founded a dedicated SOAS Student parents WhatsApp group, which is also active with over 30 members.

## **3. Mature Students [Zoom] Socials**

I have been regularly hosting Zoom Socials for my fellow Mature Students, which have been pretty successful, with up to twenty students attending each time. The exact time/day varies due to my other commitments as I'm a full-time postgrad myself, but I have generally managed to organise one almost every week, and intend to continue for the rest of the term. They are promoted through the all-student 'WhatsOn Newsletter' and on social media.

## **4. Working with Student Parents & Carers**

As many of you will know firsthand, the current lockdown situation is providing some real and distinct challenges for students who are trying to manage their studies alongside homeschooling children and/or caring for elderly or vulnerable friends/relatives who are shielding at this time. With this in mind I, and some other SU officers (Roza, Lucia & Felix) have been trying to provide extra support for this group. I have organised two Student Parents & Carers Forums, and other SU Officers and myself are lobbying SOAS for additional support.

I am also proposing a Student Parents Officer role on the SU Executive Committee.

## **5. Mitigating Circumstances**

Of all the projects I am working on with other part-time and full-time officers at the SU, the most time-consuming and time-sensitive ones is that of Mitigating Circumstances. Lucia (Academic Affairs Officer), Felix (Disabled Students and Carers Officer) and myself are among the many people getting daily queries about this policy. Therefore, with the support of Sabrina (Co-President Democracy & Education), we have been consulting directly with the Mitigating

	<p>Circumstances and Student Services staff on this issue. We are hoping to see concrete improvements to both the terms of the policy, and the communications around it, which I will share with you as soon as I have them.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>6. Other Ongoing Initiatives</b>          Academic Writing Support          Careers Support          Teaching &amp; Assessment Policy          Peer Mentoring &amp; Bridging Courses</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>7. Communication &amp; Transparency</b>          I have started making and uploading video updates, which have been well-received so far (currently on <a href="http://web.microsoftstream.com/video/">/web.microsoftstream.com/video/</a>)</p> <p>Working with Jack and Anna (SU Staff) to produce and information video about being a Trustee at SOAS SU, as part of a wider improved communications push;</p> <p>Started a targeted Email Newsletter to make use of the 'Self-ID' function (and respond to student feedback that emails are preferred contact method of most mature students)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>9. Democracy &amp; Representation</b>          Ongoing involvement as a Student Rep for my department (Anthropology);          Preparing and proposing several motions for UGM (22nd Feb.);          23rd - 26th March - NUS Liberation Conference (I am attending as a delegate);</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dideolu Olufelo</b>          (Postgraduate Research Officer)</p>	<p>Since being elected in November 2020 as the PGR Officer there has not been a proper handover of activities and detailed information of projects or initiatives worked on at the PGR levels being handed over to me. I don't have an official PGR officer email address as well. I have also received some parts of the training in January. I am aware there are supposed to be more but due to elections being delayed and enrolment being delayed there has been a bit of disorganization on the process.</p> <p>However, within the capacity I have been able to work and engage with students I have been able to carry out the following duties.</p> <p>Ensure student voices are being heard on challenges or issues that concerns them regardless of location during the pandemic period through the PHD Studio with the Doctoral School, The Student Feedback Panel, Careers Office and the Research Student Association.</p> <p>Ensure students are aware of all the available support</p>

	<p>provided by the school for a fruitful doctoral experience such as workspaces, PhD Managers, virtual hubs, teams, contacts, research seminars, teaching, careers, webinars, job opportunities, mentors and tutors.</p> <p>Ensure a working and effective communication management between the research office, departments and students in terms of enrolment, training needs, project deadline, requirements for upgrade, importance of auditing modules and adequate information for International Students.</p> <p>Liaise with other members of the student union in actions and disseminating information to the RSA and students on challenging issues affecting the PGR community.</p>
<p><b>Emma Thackwray &amp; Alex Allen</b> (Sports Officers)</p>	<p>This year has been a disappointing year for sport. Following successful online freshers hosted by your sports committees, we were able to provide in-person, outdoor training sessions in between lockdowns. It came as no surprise, albeit disappointment, to us all when BUCS and LUSL announced the official cancellation of the rest of the season, but we've been working hard to enable an easy transition for when things open up again. As restrictions ease up and following government guidelines, we look forward to being able to set-up some kind of in-person activity in the near future. We understand sport plays an important role in students' lives and want to be able to provide as much support, even from a distance. We very much welcome any suggestions as to online activities, support groups, or online type workouts (as we hosted last year). Feel free to send us a message via the @soassports Instagram page, or email us at 646947@soas.ac.uk (Emma) and 661165@soas.ac.uk (Alex) to submit any suggestions, or simply have a chat with us. We're all in this together.</p>
<p><b>Rima Koley</b> (Entertainment Officer)</p>	<p>No report submitted</p>
<p><b>Janat Malik</b> (Environment Officer)</p>	<p>No report submitted</p>
<p><b>Jake Isaac</b> (International Officer)</p>	<p>No report submitted</p>
<p><b>Josh Mock</b> (LGBTQIA+ Officer)</p>	<p>No report submitted</p>
<p><b>Heleena Pankhurst</b> (People of Colour Officer)</p>	<p>No report submitted</p>
<p><b>Lizzy Cox &amp; Victor Max Smith</b> (Trans* &amp; Gender Identity)</p>	<p>No report submitted</p>

Officers)	
<b>Emma Masing &amp; Tara Bhat</b> (Womxns' Officers)	No report submitted
<b>Katie Saunders &amp; Michael Shand</b> (Working Class Officers)	No report submitted
<b>Mohamed Malainine</b> (Postgraduate Taught Officer)	No report submitted