



Union General Meeting Minutes

Friday 7th May 2021

3pm - 5pm

Zoom

Chair: Sara Bafo (Goldsmiths SU)

Agenda

1. Introduction & Ground Rules
2. **Motion 1:** The University Should Cover Any Costs Associated with Mitigating Circumstances Applications
3. **Motion 2:** Sabbatical Role for Black African, Black 4. Caribbean and Black Students of the diaspora
4. **Motion 3:** Introduce a 'QTIPOC Officer' to SOAS SU
5. **Motion 4:** To Stand in Solidarity with and Support the Mass Campaign to Resist the Police Crackdown Bill (the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill)
6. Ratifying the Minutes of the Previous UGM
7. AOB

1. Ground Rules & Introduction

Sara: Hi I'm Sara and I'll be your UGM Chair for this meeting.

Sara introduced the UGM.

2. Motion 1: The University Should Cover Any Costs Associated with Mitigating Circumstances Applications

Proposer Introduction

Felix: Medical evidence can cost between £10 - over £100. These costs shouldn't be handled by students if the School is requesting this. This motion requests that the Union requests a fund from the School for students to cover these costs.

Questions

N/A

Amendments

N/A

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Felix: The Union will request a fund from the School for mitigating circumstances, which will be widely advertised.

3. Motion 2: Sabbatical Role for Black African, Black Caribbean and Black Students of the diaspora

Proposer Introduction

Samantar & Pauline: Calling for a sabbatical role for Black African, Black Caribbean, and

Black Students of the diaspora. We would like a specific role to support the Black student body. There is no one at a full time level in the Union to support Black students and their issues currently. This would provide resources and space for support. This would be a democratically elected position, as per other sabbatical roles, for a Black SOAS student or graduating student.

Questions

Question 1: The candidate would have to self-ID as Black but would the voters have to self-ID as Black to vote?

Answer 1: The role will be self identifying, but all students can vote for this role as they would impact all students with their work. Having non-Black students vote would allow for greater allyship and conversations. This can rebuild and reshape the collective student body relationship.

Amendments

N/A

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Samanatar & Pauline: This Union Believes

2.1 All students deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, and many are. However, Black students continue to face the same issues that many of their previous alumni have faced at SOAS, at least since the days of Walter Rodney (PhD History 1966), Paul Robeson (Swahili and phonetics 1934) and Ivan Van Certima (1969).

2.2 Although there are other marginalised groups, the marginalisation of Black students at SOAS and Black people globally is unique. There is a lack of respect for the Black person as a being to this day. The disrespect Black students face is often caused by the fact that the perpetrators of anti-Blackness are rarely penalised for their acts as the institution ignores the complaints of Black students by not taking credible action.

2.3 Having such a role will make other SU Sabbatical Roles more productive for the rest of the student body for two reasons:

1. They can focus on the issues that pertain to their office, which do not exclusively focus on Black students.
2. This allows for more excellent representation of the body as a whole and provides time and resources to be redirected to the other responsibilities they are elected for.

2.4 The attainment gap is racist: The lack of success associated with Black students is an external issue and not an inadequacy or deficiency of intellect. It reveals the institution's determinist approach, which perpetuates anti-Black racism, fueling hostility in a learning environment.

2.5 The SOAS Student's Union has been insufficient in addressing racial abuse towards Black students, and complaints have not been adequately dealt with, as attested to by the Black students. The latter still suffer from anti-Black racism in their classes without recourse. Some of these Black students have recently graduated with the racialised trauma incurred at SOAS.

2.6 The Black student body shouldered the work on anti-Black racism and its injuries and spending inordinate amounts of time gathering limited resources to assist Black students injured by racism and not focus on their studies.

2.7 The executive board has failed, the academic committee has failed, widening participation has failed, decolonising SOAS has failed. If all parts of the institution have failed, what will the welfare of Black students at SOAS continue to look like?

4. Motion 3: Introduce a 'QTIPOC Officer' to SOAS SU

Proposer Introduction

Hasan: Historically there's been a lack of POC representation in the role of LGBT Officer. Before I was in this role there was a space of 8 years without a POC person in this role, which has led to a lack of POC representation in SU LGBT events. There could be an argument that a lack of representation in the role has led to a lack of representation in SU spaces. QTIPOC experiences and needs are unique. There's no elected officer to represent QTIPOC students currently. Since 2011 there's been no trans* student in the role of LGBT Officer, but following the introduction of a Trans* & Gender Identity Officer there has always been a trans* student filling this role. This shows that the introduction of this role has empowered trans* students to run in SU elections.

Questions

Question 1: Is it true no trans*/non-binary student has been in the LGBTQIA+ Officer role?

Answer 1: Yes - from looking back at the names of people who have been elected in the past it doesn't seem to suggest anyone who won has been trans* or non-binary.

Question 2: As you know we can only have a limited number of exec officers what is it about the intersection of queer and poc that's more important than other intersections.

Answer 2: There's no limitation on the number of exec we have, just the number of trustees. We need 80 votes for this role so we can make this role but make sure it's not a Trustee too. I think every student should be able to introduce a role if they feel the representation. I don't want to talk about my lived experience right now.

Question 3: What support would be given to this role as we've had difficulty with exec officer roles (e.g. trans* officers) struggling to engage with their roles due to lack of support? And how would this relate to caucuses?

Answer 3: The idea of support goes across all officer roles. I know organisations and individuals who can support the elected students. The exact support can be worked out by trustees and exec.

Amendments

Pauline & Samantar: Change the name to 'QTIBPOC Officer' to include Black under the umbrella

Questions

Argument Against

Vote

Amendment Carries

For: 30 / Against: 0 / Abstain: 0

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Hasan: I know this role won't resonate or impact a number of people here but there needs to be a quora of 80 people voting so I would ask you to be an ally and show solidarity by voting for this motion and passing it on to others.

5. Motion 4: To Stand in Solidarity with and Support the Mass Campaign to Resist the Police Crackdown Bill (the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill)

Proposer Introduction

Yasmin: This motion will demonstrate that as a union and as a community we stand in solidarity with all those resisting the police crime and sentencing bill. This bill should be called the police crackdown bill and it will give new sweeping powers to the police to crackdown on 'non-violent protests that have a disruptive effect'. Protest is meant to be disruptive!

The bill criminalises GRT communities by making trespassing a criminal not civil violation. It will embolden police violence towards already marginalised communities especially black and brown communities.

This bill is born out of Priti Patels fury at Black Lives Matter protests in the summer and XR shut downs of londons main streets. Its also a draconian attempt to scare activists into not repeating actions like the toppling of Slave trader Edward Colton's statue in Bristol by

increasing the criminal penalty for damaging a memorial from 3 months to 10 years.

The bill also expands the Prevent duty by drawing in local councils, schools and NHS trusts to prevent 'serious violence' which effectively translates into a Prevent duty for 'knife crime'. This without a doubt will play out in radicalised ways that will ultimately result in more police violence towards Black and brown communities.

The proposed bill also expands prison schools as 'secure schools' and aids the megaprison expansion plans by creating the means with which to arrest people to fill new prison places.

Finally there is so much more that is wrong with this bill and it must be completely scrapped but we have to remember that as students we use protest, we are protesting Adam's reinstatement on Monday, we march in solidarity with workers during strikes, and we remember the brutality of the police that Kettled students in parliament square after the fee hike in 2010. This bill endangers our communities and our right to be heard. We will not only resist this bill to stop it from passing but we will not comply with it if it does.

Questions

N/A

Amendments

N/A

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Ella: Government wants to pass this bill which gives more power to the police, and will impact the ability to protest. The rallies and protests we hold at SOAS are noisy and disruptive and this bill would interfere with our right to protest. This motion would see us committing to support the Kill the Bill movement, collaborating with others to support the campaign.

6. Ratifying the Minutes of the Previous UGM

Oscar Ward and **Lucia Pedroso** will ratify February and March meetings.

Update: Oscar Ward confirmed the minutes of the February UGM to be accurate.

Update: Lucia Pedroso confirmed the minutes of the March UGM to be accurate.

9. AOB

N/A