



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

5th November 2021
3pm - 5pm

Chair: Lucia Rodriguez Pedroso

Agenda

1. Officer Check In
2. Update on Strike Action
3. Union General Meeting
4. SOAS 'Inclusive Language' Guidelines
5. AOB

Apologies:

In attendance: Lucia Rodriguez Pedroso, Ella Spencer, Hisham Pryce-Parchment, Ankunda, Krizzel Mapaye, Ellora Singh, Maxine Mallon, Mahek Arora, Jacynthe Roesch, Felix Henson, Arianna Simonetta, Anna Lofstrand, Vasundhara Pandey

1. Officer Check In

Skipped this week as pre-meeting introductions were had with the newly elected officers

2. Update on Strike Action

Lucia: SOAS UCU [academic staff union] have been balloting and the ballot recently closed with over 65% participation and 90% in favour of industrial action we're now moving forward with staff strikes happening in the next few weeks.

Ella: UNISON [professional services staff union] have a live ballot from a pay dispute earlier this year which they'll be organising at the same time as the UCU strike to make them more powerful. The details of the exact date and lengths of the strikes haven't been confirmed yet. We're making a strikes booklet for students so they know more information about why staff are striking, when this will happen, and what the SU will be doing to support students. I don't believe the strikes will start before November 29th which gives us time to make some decisions as a Union. We've been organising events with UNISON and UCU recently so students can get more information about the potential strikes and air their grievances.

Lucia: These strikes are a national movement, not just SOAS. For UCU this is over changes to pensions which could result in some members of staff losing around 50% of their pensions. In our personal capacity as individuals the 4 sabbatical officers support these strikes, although we acknowledge the disruption this will cause to all students. We need to think about what we can do for students during the strikes (e.g. teach outs, how to support students, how to show solidarity with staff, etc). It's worth remembering that the working conditions of staff are our learning conditions, so if their conditions aren't good then neither are ours.

Lucia summarised the different ways officers need to think about strikes from an Executive Officer and Trustee point of view, and how being a Trustee impacts the way officers can engage with strikes

Ella: Important to remember that even if the Students' Union votes to close during strike days we will continue to run our core services on these days (e.g. staff working from home), and we'll see how we can work with other facilities and campuses to offer students working/prayer spaces elsewhere.

The floor was opened to questions from Exec to the Sabbatical Officers about the strikes. For convenience, the answers to questions have been summarised below:

- It is likely SOAS buildings will be picketed, however Senate House will remain accessible through the non-SOAS entrance (TBC)
- Payment of student staff during strikes will be decided by the SU Trustee Board, thinking about the income and financial situation of the Union
- The SU will be organising teach outs alongside UCU to support students to have continued opportunities to access education during the strikes

- Picket lines and teach outs will be outside, however we will also promote wearing masks at picket lines and teach outs to ensure covid safety
- The SU will be talking to SOAS' new Chief Operating Officer and will discuss putting the staff wages not paid to strikers into a student hardship fund
- The library will most likely remain open under a reduced service (TBC), however we will also be looking into alternative study spaces for students to use during strikes

3. Union General Meeting

Lucia: UGMs are essentially a 'student council' at SOAS SU, where students submit policy proposals for other students to vote on, and any policy which passes in these meetings gets adopted by the SU. Our next UGM is on November 25th (online) and we've sent comms out to students to advertise this. Previously passed policy includes '*for the SU to lobby SOAS to divest from fossil fuels*' and you can view them all on the SU website; you're welcome to submit anything you'd like to a UGM if you have any proposals.

4. SOAS 'Inclusive Language' Guideline

Lucia: After the events of March 11th there was an investigation in SOAS and a recommendation from this investigation was for SOAS to create an Inclusive Language Guideline which has been shared with students via email. CW: There are slurs within the guideline. We want to receive any feedback and input from you all about how you feel about this guideline so we can pass this back to the School.

Krizzel: What's the accountability if a member of staff breaks the Inclusive Language Guideline?

Lucia: It's unclear, and we've raised this with SOAS.

Ella: Also remember that we don't have to use the tools of management to hold the university to account!

5. AOB

Felix: Disabled History Month runs from 18 November - 20 December. Would like to host a meeting to discuss events we can host throughout this month.