

This is the SOAS Students' Union Strategic Plan, up until the School's centenary year. It has been written with input from the Student body via the Student Union Survey of June 2010 and the Strategic Referendum of October 2010, and with extensive discussion with the trustees.

VALUES:

At the heart of the Strategic plan are five core values that should guide the Trustees in their stewardship of the Union. These were developed by the 2010-2011 Trustee Board as the core values that describe SOAS Students' Union.

ACTIVE – DIVERSE – DISTINCT – INTERNATIONAL – CHALLENGING

The next challenge will be to turn these values into a Mission Statement, as a shorthand to our Charitable Objects, which are as follows:

The Union's objects are the advancement of education of Students at The School Of Oriental and African Studies for the public benefit by:

- 1. promoting the interests and welfare of Students at The School Of Oriental and African Studies during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising Students;*
- 2. being the recognised representative channel between Students and The School Of Oriental and African Studies and any other external bodies; and*
- 3. providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its Students.*

5 Year Strategic Plan

This five year plan will be supplemented with annual plans which move towards the key objectives. These will be defined by the sabbaticals and agreed by the trustees. The key principle for the annual plans is the need to set realistic, but aspirational targets in these areas, as something to work towards. The strategic plan contains a few overall operational principles and then details on the six strategic goals identified in the Union Strategic Referendum of 2010.

OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

The Union will develop an annual plan and budget for its main charitable operations; the running of sports and societies, the running of the student representation scheme, and democratic membership services. It will also maintain a management plan for all statutory responsibilities such as employment and financial responsibilities. To service this we will produce a risk register and a set of regular management accounts to be considered by the Trustees.

Where the development of these activities these sit outside the main strategic goals, the Union will maintain current levels of service where appropriate, reviewing and removing any which are no longer required. The strategic plan will also allow for the flexibility of incoming officers to develop plans from manifesto pledges

The Union will develop an annual budget and operational plan for its commercial activities bearing the following principles in mind:

- All Union commercial outlets should be financially sustainable. Any which require cross subsidy should be reviewed to improve their viability, bearing in mind there may be a case for subsidy on a service provision basis.

- The Union should operate all commercial services to the benefit of its members, under the Union's objects. Operating commercial services are not an end in themselves.
- The Union will look at developing new commercial services where appropriate, considering its responsibility to provide services, raise money for student activities, and create employment opportunities for students.
- The Union commercial outlets should aim to make a small profit on an annual basis to help subsidise sports and society operations. Under the Union's Reserves Policy operational profit a proportion will go back to sports and societies, the rest into capital reserves.

Below are the six strategic goals for the Union with the key performance indicators we are working towards, with suggestions of stepping stones to aid in the development of the annual operational plans.

The six areas of priority identified by the strategic referendum were: Education, Sport Development, Internationalisation, Environment and Ethics, Enterprise and Employability and Welfare.

1: EDUCATION

This goal asks the Union to monitor the education delivered at all levels to students at SOAS and aims to improve this over the next five years. Whilst from survey data we know that students are very satisfied with the quality of teaching at SOAS, they are less satisfied with feedback and other aspects of the teaching.

The key measurable statistic is the overall National Student Survey results, and in particular the stats on the education questions. It needs to be remembered that the NSS is just for undergraduates however and we should also be gathering data and ensure that Postgraduate and non-degree students are also considered.

Key Performance Indicator: National Student Survey overall score raised to 4.5 by 2016 (it has been stable at 4.3 since 2007)

Secondary indicators: Student barometer results / Postgraduate survey results / QAA

Key stepping stones: The annual plan should develop a key educational goals paper for the year to be discussed and developed with student reps. This should be taken to Academic Board and reps should take this to relevant meetings. Refreshing and energising the Student Rep system.

2: SPORT DEVELOPMENT

SOAS has the worst sports facilities of any University in the UK as per the Times Student Experience Survey 2011. There are also relatively low numbers of students participating in both competitive and non-competitive sport, which may be due to the shortage of facilities. Improvement in facilities should improve numbers participating, but we need to also look at the numbers taking part in non-competitive sports.

Key Performance Indicator: Number of students playing regular sport organised via the Students Union raised to 800 (from 330 : 2011)

Secondary indicators: Times Higher Student Experience Survey results for Sports Facilities improved to over 4.5.

Key stepping stones: The annual plan should look at in the first instance getting regular sports facilities, and securing additional funding where necessary. They should also look at the portfolio of sport offered to see if this could be increased and improved. Students should also be surveyed to see the extent they would play sport if it was available.

3: INTERNATIONALISATION

SOAS is an international university from the core of its mission. As such the large proportion of international students is normal for SOAS Students' Union and we already have high student satisfaction ratings from our international students (from the International Student Barometer). Nevertheless we have never really examined our offering for international students, and also should consider how to improve the international experience of home students.

Key Performance Indicator: International Student Satisfaction, as reported by the International Student Barometer raised to 90% Very Satisfied / Satisfied with the Students' Union.

Secondary Indicators: Proportion of home alumni working abroad within two years of graduation (destination survey). Bespoke survey questions about SOAS as an international hub.

Key Stepping Stones: The annual plans should in the first few years engage with the NUS Internationalising Students Unions project. A more thorough evaluation of international students' union projects such as Beyond Borders to see how they contribute to the international feel at SOAS. Also a more wide ranging survey of international students at SOAS to identify particular needs within the University (such as an international office).

4: ENVIRONMENT AND ETHICS

The ethical and environmental sustainability of SOAS is important to its students. It is important that SOAS operates within an ethical framework, and where a choice is available, deals only with organisations which shares its ethical standards. The Union is also very active in environmental issues, with a Silver Green impact award (from NUS's Environment & Ethical department) and are keen on improving this standard.

Key Performance Indicator: Improved score in Green Impact Awards, achieving Gold Standard within five years.

Secondary Indicators: Bespoke survey results around ethics, clearer accessible ethical policies. Investors In People standard. Success of the School's Carbon Plan.

Key Stepping Stones: Engaging more students in environmental action around the School. Development of a set of joined up ethical guidelines (draft an ethics policy), perhaps in collaboration with the School, which may also include how we deal with difficult international situations. Get the School to improve monitoring data for the Union where possible.

5: ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYABILITY

One of the core by-products of the Union's extra-curricular activities is the development of skills and experience for work. For a large number of students University is a core part of their training for their chosen professions, and the volunteering within the Union is a core part of this skills development. Leadership training and innovation is at the heart of enterprise, and the Union is in a position to also support student enterprise projects, in which students can direct their own skills development.

Key Performance Indicator: improvement of employability statistics over the next five years as demonstrated by the DHLE stats. 2009-10 87.3% employment rate up to 90% in 2016.

Secondary Indicators: Number of enterprise projects run. The number of students engaged in employability and enterprise activities (in conjunction with the School's Career's Service and Enterprise Office).

Key Stepping Stones: Engaging with the School's Employability Strategy. Working with Enterprise on the Enterprise Passport pilot. Creating an enterprise fund. Identifying key skill sets developed within Society activities, to help quantify this for references. Developing more internships via the Radio.

6: WELFARE

With the advent of increased tuition fees, and the global financial crisis, pressures on student welfare issues will be greater than ever over the next five years. It is imperative that the Union monitors and guides the School's OFFA agreement, and campaigns for more students support, both pastoral and financial. Whilst the Union does not provide any direct welfare services itself, it does work closely with the School's provision and is able to provide a bridge between students and Student Services to prevent drop-outs and increase satisfaction

Key Performance Indicator: Direct resources spent on welfare within the School, and overall increase in provision.

Secondary Indicators: Improvement in the School drop-out rate. Increase in overall student satisfaction, and satisfaction in welfare areas. Numbers of people accessing welfare services (comparative with similar institutions).

Key Stepping Stones: Developing a Union vision for Welfare Services in the School (making services more accessible). Running specific welfare campaigns such as around Mental Health. Meeting with Students Services to define their needs, making sure money is available for all students. Monitoring and improving the personal tutoring system.