



Union General Meeting Minutes

10th May 2022

1pm - 3pm

Zoom

Chair: Ryan Ginger (City SU)

Agenda

1. Introduction & Ground Rules
2. **Motion 1:** Change the name of 'Womxn's Officer' to 'Women's Officer'
3. **Motion 2:** Demanding more support and inclusion for study abroad programs and immigrant students
4. **Motion 3:** Cops Off Campus
5. **Motion 4:** SOAS Justice for Workers proposal for a mural of Consuelo Moreno, Lenin Escudero and Sandy Nicoll in the JCR
6. **Motion 5:** Affiliate to and actively promote London Nightline at SOAS
7. **Motion 6:** Improve SOAS student support
8. **Motion 7:** Solidarity with GOSH workers
9. **Motion 8:** Solidarity with couriers organising against pay cuts and discrimination
10. **Motion 9:** Resist SOAS' Authoritarian Crackdown
11. Executive Committee Reports
12. Ratifying the Minutes of the Previous UGM
13. AOB

1. Ground Rules & Introduction

Ryan: Welcome. I'm the Community & Events Manager at City SU.

Ryan introduced the team supporting the UGM.

Please take a moment to look through the ground rules which govern this meeting, and that you respect these rules.

2. Motion 1:

Proposer Introduction

Lucia: As you may know we have a Womxns Officer in the SU's Executive Officer roles. Three years ago this role was changed from 'Womens' to 'Womxns'. As language has evolved we don't believe this is appropriate anymore. This term used to be used to include trans* women, however now it is an exclusionary term as it aims to differentiate between trans* women and women, despite the fact trans* women are women. After discussing with the feminist society and our current Womxns Officer and Trans* Officer, we think this rename is better for the community.

Questions

Question 1: N/A

Answer 1:

Amendments

N/A

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Lucia: This is important as we want to make our union spaces safe and using the right language is a step in the right direction. Please vote in favour of this if you can!

3. Motion 2:

Proposer Introduction

Gioia: African studies, Middle Eastern studies and South East Asian studies were cut off a few years ago and students from these courses have been moved to another course. Exchange programs have also been cut off. The aim of this motion is to try to get back some exchange programs or, if not possible, to help these students to get in touch with some universities in the global south to be able to study abroad themselves (if not necessarily organised by SOAS). There are some loans for EEA migrant students which SOAS don't advertise.

Questions

Question 1: Can I have more information about the maintenance loans you mentioned?

Answer 1: It's an EEA migrant worker maintenance loan. If a European student has lived in the EU for at least 3 years they can apply for this loan to get up to £6,000. You have to show evidence that you work - even part time - to get this loan.

Amendments

N/A

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Gioia: If students are willing to look for universities that are willing to provide some courses for them I don't think it's impossible to create these links for them.

4. Motion 3:

Proposer Introduction

Lucia: I am proposing this motion for the SOAS SU to adopt a cops off campus policy to support students against police surveillance & violence and to support the broader abolitionist national movement against all forms of policing, prisons & surveillance.

This is particularly important in light of the imminent passing of the PCSC bill which will hugely increase police powers, further criminalise the right to protest, as well as further criminalising trespass & expanding the uk prison system

The police do not protect us, particularly those who face any type of marginalisation. Their presence on campus is a threat to our safety. We want to follow in the footsteps of Sisters Uncut, a uk feminist direct action collective, who have launched a series of copwatch trainings as part of the kill the bill movement, and helped establish local cop watch groups.

This motion resolves SU officers to receive bystander intervention training from copwatch groups, and commits the SU to the ongoing work of political education of the student body to train students in bystander intervention and how we can keep each other safe.

It's important that we keep each other safe as a community.

Questions

Question 1: I would like information about how this would impact police's ability to investigate potential criminal activity?

Answer 1: We won't have the power to not allow the police into any spaces. If any students would like to have police involved in any challenge or situation we will be there to support them but the recommendation from the SU will be that this may do more harm than good. We just want people to understand what police presence means and that their presence in halls of residence may help some students but may also negatively impact others.

Question 2: Just to be clear, there are no specific physical actions to be taken, but just a stance that for some communities police are bad but they wouldn't face any physical opposition if investigating crimes on campus.

Answer 2: The physical actions would be training officers in bystander interventions. We wouldn't put anyone in harm's way by asking them to intervene if they see the police on campus.

Question 3: As somebody who has worked with the police I'm wondering if whether as part of the Cop Watch group there would be a dialogue with the police to try and ameliorate that? Unless we talk to them they will never learn what the right way to go about things is.

Answer 3: The SU has an abolitionist stance, so we don't believe the police will ever be the answer to solve some of the questions (e.g. sexual violence). We all remember the Sarah Everard case about how police violence acts against the community and women a lot. The bystander training would help teach how to interact with the police when they're in our spaces. As a union stance however we don't engage with the police as the SU believes there's enough evidence that reforming the police isn't adequate and we should support abolition.

Amendments

Louis: Resolves to not take physical action to prevent police

Lucia: We can't ask students to do that as it would break charity law

Louis: The occupation wasn't SU condoned but that would be classed as a physical action that prevents people doing their jobs.

Jack: The SU can't actually ask students to intervene with the police as we would then be breaking charity law. So although the point makes sense, it's somewhat moot as we couldn't do this anyway without breaking the law ourselves.

The amendment was taken back as the SU couldn't do this anyway due to charity law so there was no need to put it in writing also.

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Lucia: I understand how this motion can be controversial as we're told the police is here to protect us but they're not, they're here to serve the elite only. Coming back to the important points, this is just a way to keep our student body safe, especially those from marginalised communities.

5. Motion 4:

Proposer Introduction

Ianto: Proposing this motion as part of J4W for the SU to paint a mural. This mural would be to commemorate the outstanding commitment to justice and the SOAS community through the J4W campaign. The murals in the JCR act as a way of archiving knowledge and inspiring those who come after us, so its important we acknowledge those in our time and inspire others in our community.

Questions

Question 1: Would the motion specify who would be involved in the mural?

Answer 1: The motion doesn't specify who would be involved in the creation of the mural.

POI: Ella (the proposer) hasn't specified anyone being involved yet as the painting can't happen until next year as the bar and JCR are being refurbished. The plan is that next year the sabbatical officers will speak with the J4W campaign to work all of this out.

Amendments

N/A

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Ianto: It's important to recognise the hard work of this campaign and especially these staff, as non-academic staff rarely get the recognition they deserve.

6. Motion 5:

Proposer Introduction

Gabby: I spoke to Nightline the other day and until 2020 SOAS was affiliated to Nightline but we're not clear why they disaffiliated. Nightline is a peer to peer listening service and they operate from 6pm - 8am daily and at weekends during term time. I'm concerned that if there's a crisis students have no one to turn to [outside of 9-5 when SOAS' support runs]. I think this is a great service which could be easily done. The cost is slightly less than I've stated in this motion.

Questions

Question 1: My concern is that there are pretty good peer support networks among students right now. We're all really busy. Having another formal support network - would it add something or would it just be more work for students to take on?

Answer 1: Nightline would be staffed by students from across London, not just SOAS students, so there wouldn't be much pressure. Also volunteering on a nightline like that is a great experience. Also for students who may be on the autistic spectrum or struggle to make friendships they may not be on WhatsApp groups etc and so may miss out on the informal support.

Question 2: Would you mind articulating the differences between Nightline and Samaritans?

Answer 2: Samaritans is a listening service, focussed on suicide. Anyone can phone them at any time. The main thing about Nightline is it being students to students (which you may not on Samaritans). Being student to student you don't have to explain a lot of things about being a student etc - the person on the phone will understand the pressures you may be under and how they impact on you, which someone who isn't a student may not understand.

Question 3: What does affiliation mean? Can we currently not contact Nightline? Or does this mean we'd be able to train to provide support on Nightline?

Answer 3.1: (Lucia) You have to pay London Nightline for their service. It would cost roughly £600 from the SU and around £2,200. We would pay for SOAS students to access the platform and the affiliation means we would resolve to pay the subscription.

Answer 3.2: (Gabby) Currently any student can call Nightline whether or not their university is affiliated. If we affiliate we would be able to advertise Nightline to our students

and have access to their resources.

Amendments

N/A

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Gabby: More recently the university has been promoting an alternative service, Talk Campus. This is a peer to peer service but it doesn't include a phone line. I tried it and found that a lot of the things on it is very negative and there's lots of distressed students on it. My concern is that Talk Campus is being promoted when students can easily get to the resources they advertise.

7. Motion 6:

Proposer Introduction

Gabby: This is a broader motion given my concerns about accessing student support. Student support is divided into various departments and it's hit and miss about whether or not you get support. These departments don't coordinate with each other. The university needs a more integrated approach to student support and consult with students on their services.

Questions

Question 1: 2.1 says that students aren't accessing the support they could ... the SU doesn't believe that though? Students are accessing support but maybe not in the most effective way.

Answer 1: N/A

Amendments

Louis: 2.1 Students are not able to efficiently access the support they are entitled to and could be getting

Question: N/A

Against: As Gabby noted there are a significant amount of students who don't access the support they should and could. It's not about efficiency but about prior access. I don't think

this change is necessary.

For/Against: N/A

Vote:

For: 2 | **Against:** 12 | **Abstain:** 0

The amendment falls.

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Gabby: I'm concerned about any student who might be isolated. We need a more accessible support system that works in an integrated and proactive way.

8. Motion 7:

Proposer Introduction

Abel: Great Ormond Street Hospital has had 2 workers campaigns in the last year by the cleaners and security guards. Both groups were outsourced before their campaigns started. Outsourcing gives worse pay conditions for staff. They've been prohibited from striking outside of the workplace which is very authoritarian. Their campaign is inspiring despite being ignored by the hospital. It's important that we support them and it wouldn't be difficult to take students over to the picket lines as they're just around the corner.

Questions

Question 1: N/A

Answer 1: N/A

Amendments

N/A

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Abel: We welcome people to come up with ideas for how to support these workers and I look forward to what work we might do!

9. Motion 8:

Proposer Introduction

Abel: This motion could apply to students here in SOAS who take up part time work as courier drivers. Delivery drivers globally are asserting themselves and fighting for their rights and there's a lot we can learn from them as students. This campaign is right on our doorstep in London and so we could easily support them.

Questions

Question 1: N/A

Answer 1: N/A

Amendments

N/A

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Abel: Tonight at 6pm there's an open meeting led by a student solidarity group in Sheffield - look up Sheffield Solidarity Group. It's about how people can support couriers in their campaign. This kind of motion is most effective when more people take it up.

10. Motion 9:

Proposer Introduction

Abel: I'm sure everyone is aware of the actions which have taken place at SOAS recently,

such as the occupation in March and the authoritarian response which SOAS undertook. Especially since Habib has arrived we've seen a bullying approach to running the university. The purpose of this motion is to lay a foundation for the SU to continue working on and organising students around.

Questions

Question 1: N/A

Answer 1: N/A

Amendments

Margot: 3.4 To directly oppose and organise against the hiring of private security during strikes and student mobilisations, which disproportionately impacts racialised students, for example in their targeting for frequent ID check

Question: N/A

Against: N/A

For/ Against: N/A

Vote:

For: 15 | **Against:** 0 | **Abstain:** 0

This amendment passes.

Ianto: 3.5 Request a formal wrongdoing statement from management in their handling of the eviction, as well as during the closure of campus and misrepresentations in their communications with staff and students.

Question: N/A

Against: N/A

For / Against: N/A

Vote:

For: 16 | **Against:** 0 | **Abstain:** 1

This amendment passes.

Ankunda: 3.6 In the event of strikes and students protest in which SOAS repeats the behaviour of securitising campus. The SU should clearly communicate that these actions are the responsibility of management as intellectual authors and not the workers they employed for it.

Question: N/A

Against: N/A

For / Against: N/A

Vote:

For: 15 | **Against:** 0 | **Abstain:** 0

This amendment passes.

Marcel: adding 'Uyghur Solidarity Society' to 1.3, and adding 'physical injuries to the students and emotional distress to the student community at large' to 1.1.4

Question: N/A

Against: N/A

For / Against: N/A

Vote:

For: 16 | **Against:** 0 | **Abstain:** 0

This amendment passes.

Speech Against

N/A

Speeches For / Against

N/A

Proposer Summary

Abel: It's important we pass this motion and work towards it, holding the SU officers accountable to doing this work.

11. Executive Committee Reports

N/A

12. Ratifying the Minutes of the Previous UGM

Lucia will ratify the minutes.

13. AOB

N/A