



## **Union Forum Minutes**

**Date: 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

**Time: 13:30**

**Location: JCR**

### **In attendance:**

Gioia Scazza (GS)

Chair and Sabbatical Trustee

Yara Derbas (YD)

Sabbatical Trustee

Parwana Haydar (PH)

Sabbatical Trustee

Sushant Singh (SS)

Sabbatical Trustee

Tueurora Kaatahi (TK)

Student Idea Proposer

Matthew Jacob Pierce Zimmer (MJPZ)

Student Idea Proposer

Eve Landin (EL)

Governance and Comms Coordinator

Charlotte Morris-Davis (CMD)

Student Engagement Manager

**Various other members of the SU (meeting open to all members)**

## 1. Intro to SOAS

**GS** introduces the meeting. Runs through safe space policy, clubs, campaigns, and societies, democratic processes, representation processes in SOAS, democracy changes, and advice available through SU.

## 2. Roles discussion

### a. Sustainability Officer

Sustainability Officer		
<b>Speech for:</b> Yara Derbas	Committing to SOAS SU being environmentally conscious. Focus on air filters.	
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a	
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	Questions	Answers
	Any ideas for specific projects to work on?	<b>YD</b> says to focus on green week but make sustainability more embedded in everything we do. Raises issue of over-heating of the building.
	Thoughts on sustainable fashion	<b>PH</b> adds clarification on sustainability work already underway such as solar panels and clothes swap programs.

### b. Mental Health Awareness Officer

Mental Health Awareness Officer	
<b>Speech for:</b> Yara Derbas	Focus on raising consciousness around mental health issues, role to sign-post students in need to relevant services. Specifically, not a counselling role where the holder gives mental health support. Suggests holder should look at mitigating circumstances, look at a self-certifying process.
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	N/a

**c. Anti-racism Action Officer**

<b>Anti-racism Action Officer</b>	
<b>Speech for:</b> Yara Derbas	Link with campaigns on campus that are tackling racism. Build collective power around anti-racism. Come up with new campaigns around institutional racism and new changing needs of student body.
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	N/a

**d. Sports Officer**

<b>Sports Officer</b>	
<b>Speech for:</b> Parwana Haydar	Make sure all sports are running smoothly and have resources, equipment and support they need from the SU. To increase engagement among SOAS students with sports.
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	N/a

**e. Arts and Culture Officer**

<b>Arts and Culture Officer</b>		
<b>Speech for:</b> Parwana Haydar	SOAS SU hasn't had culture officer before. States we have rich cultural and artistic community.	
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a	
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
	Would these roles have a budget to work with?	PH states there would be access to some funds from the SU on a case-by-case basis but no budget allocated to role.
	What makes this officer different from the presidents of arts and culture societies at SOAS?	This is a role looking into encouraging arts and culture at, rather than focusing on specific areas of arts and culture.

## f. Cost of Living Officer

Cost of Living Officer		
<b>Speech for:</b> Sushant Singh	Focus on accommodation, livelihood. How the university can help, how local politicians can help.	
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a	
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	<b>Questions:</b>	<b>Answers:</b>
	Are there practical ways to help students with cost-of-living?	Campaigning for a specific cost-of-living budget, aimed at helping students from marginalised communities. More guidance on what students can do to deal with cost-of-living increases. To ensure the scholarship budgets are not reduced.

## g. International Students Officer

International Students Officer		
<b>Speech for:</b> Sushant Singh	SOAS is a diverse university. To address unique problems of international students. Focus on supporting students through the challenges of moving country and obstacles they face.	
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a	
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	<b>Questions:</b>	<b>Answers:</b>
	How do you deal with roles that are duplicated? Eg. roles within SOAS that already cover int. students' needs.	This role will focus on Int. students needs through the lens of the SU.
	Question on fee difference for int. students than students from UK.	The role holder will hopefully focus on this issue and raise with the institution.

## h. Mature Students Officer

Mature Students Officer		
<b>Speech for:</b> Sushant Singh	To address the specific needs and issues of mature students. Increase inclusion and representation in areas of policy making and decision making.	
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a	
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	<b>Questions:</b>	<b>Answers:</b>
	Mature students are not discriminated against on any level. Why should there be an officer to represent them?	<b>YD</b> replies saying role is not to advocate, just to represent them in any area of their work. Suggests there are obstacles in getting involved in SU activities and student experience as they are older, and may feel detached. <b>SS</b> adds that the role would be focused on how to make SOAS a more inclusive place for mature students. It is the duty of the university to include them in not only academic services but extra-curricular activities and other resources the School provides.

## i. Alumni Officer

Alumni Officer	
<b>Speech for:</b> Sushant Singh	Being an alumnus of SOAS is life-time connection to uni. Suggests alumni network is great resource for students and ex-students throughout their lives.
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	N/a

**j. SASS Officer**

<b>SASS Officer</b>	
<b>Speech for:</b> Matthew Jacob Pierce Zimmer	<p>Role of advocacy around the issue of security on campus.</p> <p>Heightened security presence recently, tensions with union strikes and student activism, monitoring students coming in and out of building.</p> <p>Issues of harassment around race and gender from security personnel.</p> <p>Security not here to make students safe, here to make management safe.</p>
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	N/a

**k. Afrikan studies Officer**

<b>Afrikan Studies Officer</b>		
<b>Speech for:</b> Tueurora Kaatahi	<p>Aim of the role is to highlight the A in SOAS. Revisit what SOAS is and what it stands for. Bringing awareness of what Afrika is and what Afrika stands for.</p> <p>Intends to create awareness through events, collaboration with other officers eg int. officers to give students an opportunity to study abroad and experience hands on the languages and cultures in Afrika.</p> <p>Promote social interaction and support among Afrikan students.</p>	
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a	
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	<b>Questions:</b>	<b>Answers:</b>
	Would this role be centred around trying to bring more funding back to Afrikan studies at SOAS?	The role holder would advocate for this, for inclusive theory.

Afrikan Studies Officer		
	What activities and programmes would you implement for increased inclusivity among Afrikan students?	There are already events for Afrikan students, but they are not relatable. To include fellow Black and Afrikan students in the planning of these events to make them more relatable.
	Is inclusivity possible within the atmosphere of SOAS as an institution that has engaged in colonialism?	Acknowledges reality of this but says we are here to rewrite the narrative and make own history.

### I. BDS Officer

BDS Officer	
<b>Speech for:</b> Matthew Jacob Pierce Zimmer	Continuation of support for BDS which was established in 2015 vote at SOAS SU. Advocacy role for Palestinian population on campus. Work closely with other roles such as liberation roles. Hold accountable the lack of commitment to BDS from institution. Uni currently funding Israel through funding Israeli institutions.
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a
<b>Summary:</b>	<b>YD</b> notes the existence of the Palestine Society and adds that the BDS officer would also focus on tangible change and the material conditions for Palestinians.

### m. Distance Learning Officer

Distance Learning Officer	
<b>Speech for:</b> Gioia Scazza	For students that are not able to be on campus. To support these students with admin and support. A bridge between the students, the SU and administration of the university.
<b>Speech against:</b>	N/a
<b>Questions and answers:</b>	N/a

