

# Goldsmiths Precarious Workers' Bulletin April 2019



In the space of a number of months, solidarity between precarious workers and students at Goldsmiths has crystallised around the issue of race. In this time, anti-racist workplace militancy and student activism have made one thing clear: we cannot understand how market forces have dominated higher education without understanding how much they depend on and exploit racial hierarchies. Discriminatory practices that exploit differences of race, culture and citizenship status are not only the result of the marketisation of higher education but indeed constitute its core practices. Outsourcing becomes part of the economic armature of university management because race and citizenship status already socially qualifies an available mass of exploitable precarious labour. Relatedly, the university is able to take in more students without making sufficient organisational changes to accommodate a larger and more diverse student body because it can rely on particular sections of staff and students to shoulder the extra work of supplementing this shortfall.

The occupation of Deptford Town Hall represents a student-led re-purposing of the campus which has not only acted on glib calls for decolonization, but has transformed how, where and to what end learning might occur in higher education. Meanwhile the workplace militancy of peripheralised workers has profoundly shifted perceptions of what a university actually is – seen now not simply as a neutral site of learning but as a workplace underpinned by a particularly egregious form of class struggle. And here again, the collaboration of precarious workers, union officials, students and academic staff in workplace organising has completely transformed the site, terms and aims of learning in the university.

Instead of assuming a common cause in defending an industry most students will never work in, (see recent UCU

strikes), anti-racist politics has grown spontaneously from within the student body itself. Anti-racist praxis has become a source of militancy for students because it speaks directly to their experiences and more significantly marks a battleground that does not begin or end with the university. But beyond the prospects for staff-student solidarity, a crucial aspect of these impulses has been the way they have established radically new practices within the university. In the various anti-racist activities taking place across the campus we are beginning to see a vision of another university, against its elitist and neoliberal variants.

We maintain that the category distinction between worker and student must be given the full weight of its significance in the analysis of how value is produced in the university. However, regarding the ever present problem of how to mount a serious challenge to the marketisation of higher education, anti-racist politics has undeniably re-emerged as a galvanising force, reconfiguring the terms of solidarity between staff and students.

How long will this convergence of energies hold? In educational contexts, the life span of political initiatives is always hamstrung by the turnover of its most militant elements: students and casual workers. However what makes this moment different is the mobilization of a long-established section of workers whose presence in the university is both permanent *and* precarious. Along with the current changes in senior management personnel, this moment marks a pivotal conjuncture. To all our comrades on campus we say: hold tight!



## Against the logistical university

We oppose the implementation of the Student Attendance and Engagement Management Software (SEAtS) pilot programme. Under the cover of improving pastoral care, student experience and wellbeing, Goldsmiths University looks to be implementing a logistical surveillance system which will make the systematic collection of attendance data on students and the provision of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) reports to home office automatic. The system is the second phase of a wider bid to centralise data on staff and students for management use and potentially third party interests. The first phase of this system was initiated with the rolling out of the Goldsmiths Student App. This app was introduced with no disclaimer about how the data collected would be used. The aim of the full implementation of this centralised online system is twofold: to police the activities of students and staff within the institution to guarantee financial sustainability of university against market risk, i.e. further erode actual learning provision, and oversee visa compliance so as to maintain and expand the recruitment of international students while inflating their fees.

We know that the predictive analytics which this software boasts of, will be used to offset the risk of flagging recruitment, attendance, retention and attainment wholly toward the financial sustainability of a caste of technocratic managers, and wholly to expense of the actual well-being of students and staff. We know that the implementation of a real-time troubleshooting system which monitors the compliance of teachers and students, aims to turn students and teachers against one another. We know that a system which shifts the duty of pastoral care away from the sensitivities of teachers toward an automated system of real-time troubleshooting does not have the mental and emotional well-being of students in mind. We know that this technology is inherently racist. We know that it aims to maintain a hostile environment in our institution thereby segmenting the student experience along the lines of citizenship status according to an aggressive border regime.

We support teaching staff who are currently organising to resist the implementation of this system and we call on all academic staff to fight against the implementation of policing technologies. We along with the occupying students demand that Goldsmiths management withdraw this pilot programme immediately and provide sufficient transparency on how it currently uses data from the Student App.

The SEAtS system is one among many other tracking protocols being used to monitor and discipline activities on campus by centralising data streams. We saw last year how data from *numara footprints*, a workplace tracking and reporting system, was massaged by ISS and Goldsmiths management to justify restructuring the shift patterns of cleaners to the detriment of their working conditions. Now we know that CIS use *MoCo Touch*, a security guard tracking solution for security monitoring and proof of attendance. The increasing adoption of data-surveillance within HE is becoming ever more invasive, as evidenced by recent plans to impose a biometric fingerprint system for cleaners at UCL, which IWGB union has been opposing. We vehemently oppose the racist technostructure that is taking root in our institution. We vigorously defend the fugitive infrastructures that are developing to resist these forces.

## Cleaners campaign update

We are now less than a month away from May 1st 2019, the target date that SMT set for the cleaners to be brought back in-house as members of staff at Goldsmiths. Since the New Year, there has been a total of 4 consultative meetings held with cleaners in an effort to meaningfully involve workers in the in-housing process. Two meetings took place on the 11 March involving cleaners, ISS reps and Unison reps. The date of the 1st of May was again confirmed as the date that in-housing will be complete. Cleaners were told that all contracted ISS workers will transfer to Goldsmiths staff under the TUPE process (an acronym referring to the technical and legal aspects of transitioning workers from one employer/system of employment to another). On 19th March 2019, cleaners were invited to another set of meetings with Goldsmiths at which they were presented with information about their rights to a pension, monthly pay date, the fact that Goldsmiths holiday period runs September-August each year, and other information. Cleaners were told that length of service will likely be accounted for in the TUPE process which if confirmed is a really significant gain for long serving members of staff. But cleaners remain incredibly skeptical that the toxic culture among certain ISS managers is going to substantially subside if they remain in their positions after the in-housing. Unfortunately there were no answers to the key and urgent questions relating to shift patterns and hours, pay and the structure of operations. They were told that Goldsmiths were still waiting for due diligence data on individual staff (such as shift patterns, length of service etc) that ISS have still to pass on. Legally ISS have until 28 days before the transfer to do this (Wednesday 3 April). This appears to be Goldsmiths excuse for having failed to properly consult workers over the past 6 months. The representative from HR promised provide answers to cleaners' questions the following week. To date, cleaners have not heard anything since March 19th.

At this point cleaners are concerned and nervous. Many cleaners feel that Goldsmiths have not followed through on any of the promises that were made about transparency and involvement. For many the in-housing experience has been very similar to the September 2018 restructure implemented by ISS. Again they have been completely left in the dark about a process that will determine their future working lives. Many fear that without advance notice they will be unable to make the necessary adjustments in their home life to accommodate their new working schedules. At this point, many expect that the 1st of May deadline will not be met, and that they will feel no substantial improvements to their daily working conditions as in-house staff members.

With the help of Sheila Faucher from Unison most cleaners have shared with management their preferred shift patterns. Cleaners have since written a letter urging management to arrange a meeting immediately to discuss shift patterns, hours allocation, salary levels, and the organisation of their work going forward.



## Security Campaign Update

In January, Goldsmiths Security and Receptionists, supported by their chosen trade union the Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB), unanimously voted to begin a public campaign to be brought back in-house. Since then the IWGB union has written to management to formally request the immediate in-housing of all Security and Receptionists at Goldsmiths, highlighting the disparity in terms and conditions between this majority BAME workforce and their in-house colleagues. The union also wrote to the outsourcing company CIS to request a voluntary recognition agreement; as the IWGB's members make up over 50% of the workforce it was clear who the workers had selected as their representative. In response CIS management initiated classic union busting tactics, calling individual workers into "meetings" to question them about their membership of the IWGB, discouraged from joining the union, and telling them that the matter would be dealt with internally without "bringing the union onto campus". Enter IWGB President Henry Chango Lopez, who responded to this anti-trade union behaviour with a blistering letter to both Goldsmiths Warden Patrick Loughrey and CIS management, reminding both of the illegality of "Blacklisting" workers and the practice of 'Trade Union Detriment' falling outside the regulations of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Lopez stated that intimidation of IWGB members would not be tolerated in any way, and the Union would respond through all methods at their disposal. Since the letter, workers

have reported a major reduction in anti-union behaviour on the part of management.

The 29th of January saw the first Student and Staff campaign meeting to discuss the Security and Receptionists' demand to be brought back in-house. There was a fantastic turn-out with a mixture of IWGB Members and volunteers, teaching and facilities staff, and great student representation. After Goldsmiths SMT responded negatively to the IWGB President's request for in-housing, members called for a demonstration to take place on the 14th of February. Goldsmiths UCU and SU both passed motions of support for the workers' demands and called for SMT to negotiate with the IWGB as the workers chosen trade union. Sadly the UNISON Branch Secretary at the time (before the recent change of union leadership) issued a statement to their members describing the Security and Receptionists call for immediate parity of terms and conditions "wholly unreasonable", language which sits at odds with an investment in workers' rights.

Valentines day 2019 saw hundreds of members of the Goldsmiths Community come out to "show some love" and support their colleagues and friends in the Security and Receptionists. The IWGB brought their firebrand tactics to New Cross, with union flags, vuvuzelas, drums, and the timeless "Despacito" playing on repeat, with multiple touring minor occupations and at one point blocking the New Cross road outside Deptford Town Hall. Protesters began by marching through the Richard Hoggart building, stopping in the canteen to raise awareness to Staff and Students about the workers being told by CIS management not to use the

canteens and car parks on campus. At the end of the demo a protest was called for the 28th of February the following week. In response SMT closed Deptford Town Hall to students for the whole week following. The demo on the 28th saw the same scenes as the week before, with a banner plastered to the doors of DTH noting "CLOSED FOR CLASS STRUGGLE". The issues surrounding workers being barred access to the canteen and car park once again played a central role in the messaging of the protest.

SMT released statements in response to workers' direct experiences of segregation on campus, claiming them to be untrue. The dismissal of workers' testimony without inquiring into their validity highlights how outsourcing breeds managerial negligence. SMT don't just outsource the workers' contracts, they attempt to outsource their duty of care for members of our community. The pursuit of "value for money" translates in practice to "money over people", with workers' rights and job security sacrificed to meet self-imposed budgets. As the recent DTH student occupation so aptly highlights, it is the majority BAME workforces of cleaners, canteen, Security and Receptionist staff that face this exploitation first, with this cruel market logic then seeping to other areas of the university such as the casualisation of associate lecturers. In response to SMT's claim to have no knowledge of this exclusionary behaviour towards Security and Receptionists, the IWGB and its supporters spent a week sharing the personal stories of exploitation and segregation experienced by 7 of their Goldsmiths members, delivering 2500 flyers to people on campus.

The week following saw outsourcing company CIS voluntarily recognise the trade union UNISON as the official representative of the Security and Receptionists, regardless of the fact that the majority of

workers are members of the IWGB Union. This raises the questions "what does recognition mean?" and "what can a union do without it?". It should be stated that whilst a recognition agreement is preferable as it allows the workers' chosen representative to sit down and negotiate directly with management, it does nothing to stop the union representing and campaigning for its members. In fact, it's often noted that denying recognition to a militant trade union does little more than raise the intensity of the campaign as a response. As in the case of the cleaners in-housing campaign last year, victories for precarious workers are won by leveraging the support of the wider community against SMT's "business as usual" position, applying pressure in the form of direct action to force managements' hand to accept the demands of the workers. The reality is, no recognition = no peace for management.

This leverage tactic was used once again last week at the demo on the 26th of March as IWGB members "Reclaimed the Canteen" by sharing a group lunch in celebration at overcoming CIS' mistreatment and segregation (for which no apology has been offered by Goldsmiths SMT). Supporters marched through the campus, finishing up by showing support and solidarity for anti-racist occupiers in DTH. The speeches and shared platforms of IWGB and Goldsmiths Anti-racist Action members speaks to the unfolding intersection of workplace struggle and students taking direct action to decolonise the university. Occupiers and IWGB members have offered full solidarity with each other, with strong personal bonds being formed between the workers and the students. A new campus politics is emerging, it is decolonial, it is anti-exploitation, and it is intersectional solidarity.

**Security campaign petition:** <http://bit.ly/2GEznN>



## Anti-casualisation update

The recent UCU re-ballot for Pay and Equality which closed on Feb 22 failed to reach the 50% threshold set by the Trade Union Act. As a nationally aggregated ballot, the result in England, Scotland and Wales saw a large vote in favour of a strike (69.8%) and action short of a strike (80.5%), but at a turnout of 41%, it was 9% short of the votes needed to act upon the results. Many casualized academic staff were disappointed with the ballot results, having joined senior colleagues in solidarity on strike when their pensions were under threat in 2018, and hoping that a similar spirit would carry through to other urgent issues arising from HE's marketisation. Anti-casualisation, along with the gender pay gap, increased workloads and the falling value of pay in real terms, which made up the four core issues on the ballot, will now continue to be tackled at a local level.

GUCU anti-casualisation representatives have continued to participate in the Associate and Fractional Lecturer review group, as agreed to take place between Goldsmiths management and GUCU in the academic year 2018-19. The so-called "assimilation agreement" is a binding document in force since 2013/14 which lays out the contractual terms for hourly-paid academic staff, ensuring "equal pay for equal work" against their full-time colleagues. As over 61% of academic staff at Goldsmiths are casualized, this concerns a large number of staff who deliver a core part of the course work for a variety of degree programmes. However, these precarious workers are often isolated from the larger collegial body, ill-informed about their contractual conditions, and forced to undertake unpaid work (due to insufficient time paid to prepare for teaching or to do marking, expectations to attend training, meetings or do other administrative or pastoral work unpaid).

As part of the review, the working group have sent out detailed questionnaires to DBMs (departmental business managers) in order to gather information about the current practices around employing hourly-paid staff. With the data acquired from these questionnaires, focus groups will be set up between HR, GUCU and DBMs. In parallel with the DBM questionnaire, data is also being gathered from GTTs

(Graduate Trainee Tutors), ALs (Associate Lecturers) and Lecturer Fractionals (LFs). Both sets of data are due to feed into the reports and recommendations made by the working group at the end of the academic year. Anecdotally, GTTs, ALs and LFs have reported widespread incidences of misimplementation and non-compliance with the binding agreement. This has resulted in unpaid work being done or expected to be carried out, as well as incorrect contractual procedures taking place such as offers of permanency not being made after four years continuous service, in contravention of national employment law.

Amidst the increasing marketisation of higher education, anti-casualisation activists are keen to foreground the importance of maintaining education as a public good, values which are consistently being eroded in HE today. As we have seen student fees rise with no greater investment in staff, the issue of insufficient contact hours is increasingly becoming a norm. A recent report by Goldsmiths Student Union demonstrates that more than a fifth of undergraduates are "unhappy" with the amount of contact hours given. As one of the points of Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action's occupation manifesto of DTH proves, students' educational experiences - particularly those of the predominantly BAME students on BA Applied Social Science, Community Development and Youth Work who have had contact hours drastically reduced - are being systematically neglected. This attack on students' learning must be fought.

Accordingly, anti-casualisation activists are planning a campaign aimed at students, permanent staff and precarious academic staff to inform them of the hidden effects of systemic casualization. The campaign will encourage GTTs, ALs, and Lecturer Fractionals to work to contract and resist doing unpaid work which props up the currently inequitable system; it will encourage permanent staff members to be better informed about the pressures applied to casualized academic staff; and it will encourage students to demand better learning experiences and support casualized academic staff as part of the larger fight against the financialization of higher education and its damaging consequences.

## Occupation Update

On 12th March, a group led by students of colour organised to protest the racial abuse received by a Student Union election candidate, and to demand an end to the culture of impunity around racism on campus. They began an occupation of Deptford Town Hall, which houses most of Goldsmiths' senior management offices. The occupation is now in its fourth week! Within a few days, the occupiers had drawn up an extensive list of demands which they submitted to the Senior Management Team, signing off as Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action. The demands concretely address the mechanisms that underlie that culture of impunity, but they also reach deeper into the oppressions and exploitation that affect the lives and livelihoods of students and workers of colour and the local communities of New Cross and Deptford.

It is demanded, for example, that the university massively ramp up its efforts to tackle the BME attainment gap (whereby Goldsmiths institutionally fails students of colour, particularly Black students, in comparison with white students). GARA demands that a team of full-time staff be employed on this issue, and that students of colour themselves be included in the team. It is a sign of the university's contempt for its students of colour that it hasn't already done this — several GARA activists had made this demand over the past year, but were not listened to.

On that note, also raised are the cuts to the BA Applied Social Science, Community Development and Youth Work degree, where 80% of the students are BME. GARA demands that the contact hours be reinstated, that fees be reimbursed for lost hours, and that BME-majority courses be protected. (On this, the university's response has been that course changes are made on the basis of 'pedagogical needs and trends'; their language chimes well with our analysis of the neoliberal university, beholden to the needs and trends of the market.)

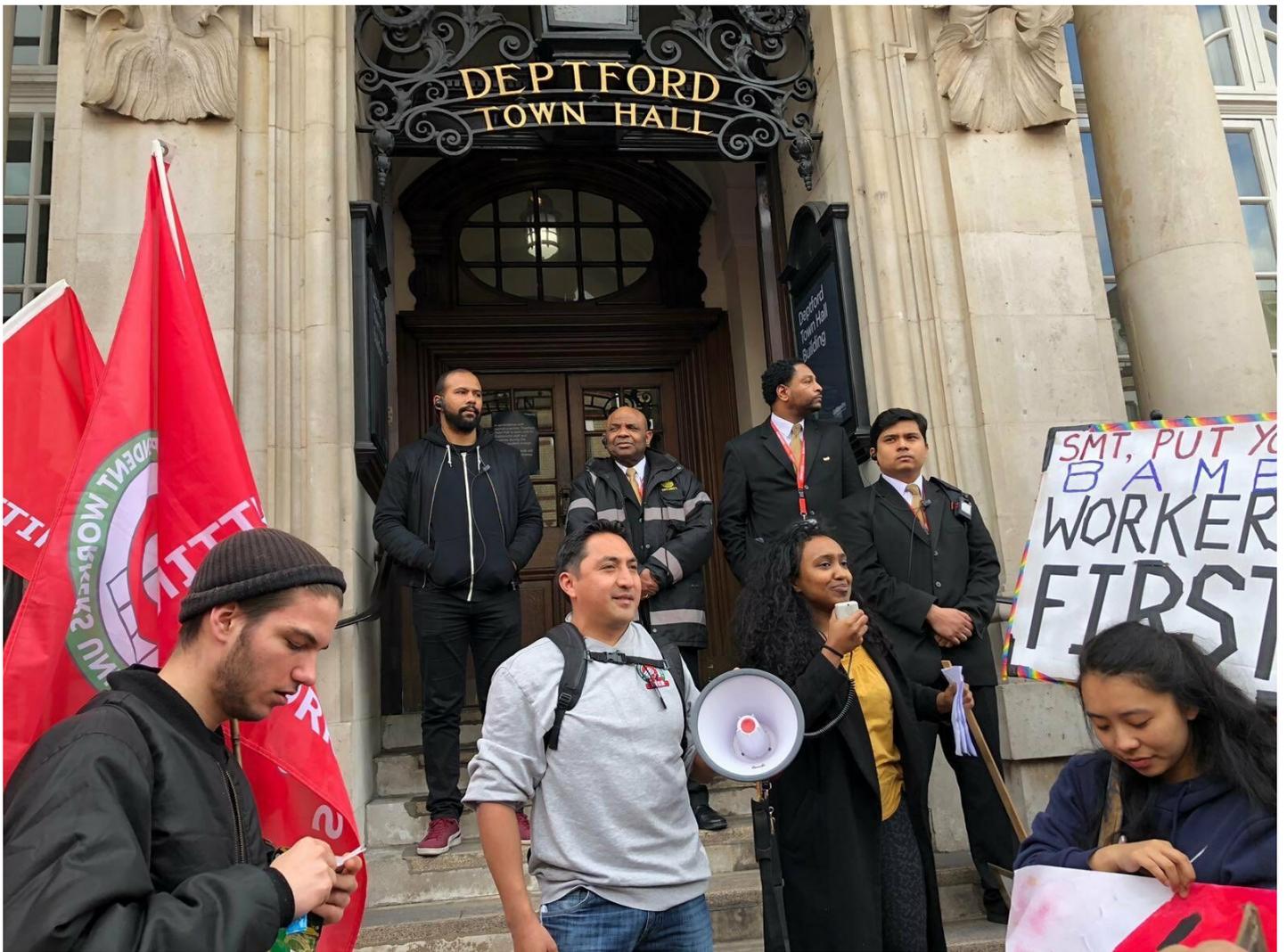
GARA is unequivocal that *all* outsourced workers must be brought in-house; they recognise outsourcing as not only an exploitative, but a racist-exploitative practice. Furthermore, in raising the demand that the university recognise IWGB (the union that the majority of security staff and receptionists have chosen to represent them), GARA is exposing the university's futile attempts to defer the demands which the workers and the IWGB

have made. In response, the university has had to reiterate its pathetic statement that Unison is the 'formally recognised trade union for security staff'; they cannot even bring themselves to mention the name of the union recognised **by** security staff – IWGB!

Deptford Town Hall – the venue in which the anti-racist occupation is taking place – is itself the subject of one of the demands. It is noted that DTH was supposed to be open to the local community, according to Goldsmiths' own statements at the time it took over the building. Instead, nearly 20 years after its purchase by the uni, it houses senior management offices and remains a securitised building, in which entry is controlled by use of ID cards. The statues that adorn its façade may symbolise the colonial past but they also stand imperiously over a neighbourhood colonised by the neoliberal university. GARA's demand that the building be fully opened to the local community is about rejecting that model of the university, and taking back control over the space.

These are not abstract demands. This last one is being demonstrated concretely in GARA's own praxis: the occupation has transformed the Town Hall into an experimental political space, hosting not only organisational meetings but also a huge range of activities, from workshops on activism and political art, to mental health training, to internationalist political discussions on the Kashmiri movement or the Somali diaspora.

The university is having to listen to these students, just as it has had to listen to the cleaners and the security guards when they too have raised demands. It comes as no surprise that they are trying to wriggle out of addressing the demands properly. In any case, we should not get caught up in the idea that demands should be deemed realistic enough by the university to be 'met' today; far more important is that the demands are wielded as a political tool. GARA is showing the way: insisting on radical, concrete demands that threaten to shake the university to its core, and mobilising a movement around those demands, on the basis of experience and solidarity. These four weeks have seen two sectors of the university's working population – students and security guards – come together, working out a new material solidarity through struggle, bringing fresh meaning to the slogan: Students and workers! Unite and fight!



## Occupation Timeline:

**March 2019:** Occupation sparked by the racial abuse of a candidate in SU Elections (breaking point of an ongoing issue of institutional racism on campus)

**12th March:** Protestors take over Deptford Town Hall. SMT meet with protestors.

**14th of March:** Building is sent into to lock-down, nobody can freely enter the building.

**15-18th of March:** Building remains in lock-down, external security are brought in, assaults against students are reported.

**18th of March:** Due to pressure from the SU and other unions, news of Goldsmiths negligence going viral and further student protests, Goldsmiths agree to open access from 9am-7pm each day.

**18th March Onwards:** Anti-racist action begin organising, teach-ins, film screenings, conferences and dance workshops within Deptford Town Hall on a daily basis.

**22nd March:** SMT agree not to file for an injunction or take legal/disciplinary action against students

**1st April:** SMT respond to GARA's list of demands with an open letter. The open letter is mostly vague and offers no concrete solutions, this letter is deemed inadequate by GARA.

**#GOLDOCCUPY**

## OUR DEMANDS

1. BRING ALL OUTSOURCED WORKERS TO BE IN-HOUSE AS GOLDSMITHS' STAFF AND RECOGNISE IWGB.
2. ACKNOWLEDGE AND REMOVE STATUES OF KNOWN COLONISERS AND THE SLAVE-SHIP.
3. FULFILL "CITY CHALLENGE" PLEDGE AND OPEN DEPTFORD TOWN HALL TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.
4. MANDATORY TRAINING FOR SMT, DEPARTMENT HEADS, LECTURERS, AND SEMINAR LEADERS ON ANTI-RACISM AND ANTI-OPPRESSION AS WELL AS TEACHING AND LEARNING.
5. AUDIT AND OVERHAUL CURRICULA ACROSS ALL DEPARTMENTS WITH EMPHASIS ON MATERIAL THAT CHALLENGES THE TRADITION OF EUROCENTRIC CONTENT.
6. PAID BAME REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH DEPARTMENT.
7. HIRE FULL-TIME STAFF TO WORK WITH ACADEMIC LEAD ON BAME ATTAINMENT, DR. NICOLA ROLLOCK, INCLUDING STUDENTS.
8. EMPLOY REPRESENTATIVE BAME STAFF IN WELLBEING AND COUNSELLING SERVICES.
9. FULL TRANSPARENCY OF SPENDING OF £100K DESIGNATED TO WELLBEING WITH DIRECT STUDENT INPUT.
10. REFORM THE HATE CRIME REPORTING CENTRE TO BE VICTIM-LED TO INCLUDE A CENTRALISED DISCIPLINARY SYSTEM.
11. REINSTATE CONTACT TIME & REIMBURSE LOST HOURS FOR BA APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH WORK DEGREE STUDENTS.
12. SUPPORT JUSTICE FOR PALESTINIAN ACTIVIST AND GOLDSMITHS ALUM HAFEZ OMAR. REINSTATE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS LIKE HIM FROM CONFLICT ZONES, PARTICULARLY PALESTINE.

detailed demands: <https://tinyurl.com/GARAManifesto>

### Important Dates:

- April 7 - Keele University solidarity meeting with GARA; DTH 12pm  
April 11 - University Council Meeting; PSH 326 16:00 - 17:00  
April 24 - Anti-Casualisation Meeting; MMB 109  
April 27 - Solidarity Forever: UVW 5th birthday party!; Rich Mix 19:30 - 01:00  
May 1 - Cleaners Mayday In-housing Party, time + venue tbc

