

SOAS Workers' Bulletin

7th Feb 2018

Free!

IMPORTANT DATES	UPDATE ON THE IN-HOUSE PROCESS
<p><u>UCU STRIKE</u></p> <p>Week 1: Thu 22nd and Fri 23rd Feb</p> <p>Week 2: Mon 26th, Tue 27th and Wed 28th Feb</p> <p>Week 3: Mon 5th, Tue 6th, Wed 7th, Thu 8th March</p> <p>Week 4: Mon 12th, Tue 13th, Wed 14th, Thu 15th, Fri 16h.</p> <p><i>SUPPORT THE STRIKE</i> <i>DON'T CROSS THE PICKET LINE</i></p>	<p>On the 26th of January, workers representatives met with SOAS management as a part of the first meeting to discuss the in-house process. SOAS' outsourced workers were shocked to learn that the working groups were designed primarily for SOAS to examine operational details (uniforms, food presentation etc), without any explicit dialogue about full contractual parity (and also without any clear understanding of important operational details such as licensing for maintenance staff!).</p> <p>At the meetings, different representatives brought up whether the future terms and conditions would be the same as other SOAS workers, and received ambiguous answers at best. These questions were repeatedly deferred, and it was explained that contractual issues would take place in a different working group where no worker or union representative was present.</p> <p>This directly contradicts Valerie Amos' email sent out to the SOAS community on the 4th of August, where she wrote: "All our current staff in central facilities teams will be directly employed by the university. This means they will be on equal terms and conditions with existing SOAS employees."</p> <p>The workers were united in their decision that they would only re-engage with these working groups once their concerns were taken seriously. They demand a timeline of the in-house process and a categorical statement from SOAS confirming that workers will be brought in-house under the exact same terms and conditions as all other staff.</p> <p>La Lucha Continua!</p>
WHY ARE UCU STRIKING?	
<p>UCU Members are striking over a dispute with Universities UK (UUK). This is part of a national strike with 61 universities taking part.</p> <p>UUK want to make changes to lecturer's pensions which would lead to the average lecturer in retirement being £10,000 a year worse off.</p> <p>If we lose pensions in universities then students' future pensions are severely threatened! Lecturers are striking for their future and students' futures.</p>	



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RESPECT OUR LIBRARY STAFF

Despite its essential role for SOAS as an educational institution, the library has been increasingly neglected over the last few years. One of the classical methods for a privatised institution to cut expenses, is the replacement of contractual staff with agency staff. The effect for the SOAS library is both an inefficient work environment - since agency staff are unfamiliar with the daily operations - and a lot of hours lost for part-time staff.

Do not misunderstand! SOAS library workers have nothing against agency staff as such, they simply want the people regularly working in the library to be given the extra hours. It is time for SOAS to start prioritising education - it is time for SOAS to start caring for the campus community!

UPDATE FROM THE IN-HOUSE WORKSTREAMS

Despite the SOAS management's tactics of division and strategic ambiguity (see page 1), outsourced workers are still intent on continuing the struggle. Many demands must be made in the fight for fair and equal conditions, but below are some of the key requirements for each branch of outsourced work here at SOAS:

Security:

Adequate training for issues like harrasment and IT, including the pay raises that come along with such qualifications;

Including habitual overtime hours as contractual hours, so that security staff are not cheated out of holiday pay.

Cleaning:

Allocating overtime hours into the permanent contracts;

Reinstating English classes that SOAS promised already in 2016;

Additional pay for cleaning 'refuse and bodily liquids' (for example: shit all over a toilet).

UNCERTAINTY CONTINUES

As has been clearly and repeatedly called out by SOAS UNISON, up to 20% of the administrative, support and external facing staff, who are affected by the latest episode of the restructuring, are on short-term contracts without any certainty over future job opportunities at SOAS.

Would you not expect that once such distress and uncertainty is flagged up to handsomely-paid managers (say, £100,000+ per annum), they would kick into action and seek to give frontline, low-paid staff assurances and certainty? Nothing of the sort. Instead, managers have come back to the Union saying that all staff on short-term contracts will have their short-term contracts extended by an average of six months

- Insecurity of jobs and contracts has been rolled out across the university and is now being extended ; the very process that was meant to bring security has just extended the insecurity

- Voluntary Severance Scheme which is just throwing money at some people to get them to leave; the University seems intent on pushing frontline staff out of the university, along with their institutional knowledge and experience of supporting students at SOAS

- The restructuring so far has only achieved adding to layers of managers whilst simultaneously exhausting staff with a consultation process on lunar proposals; useless.

All workers at SOAS, whether in-house or outsourced, must stand together for job security and fair conditions!

Maintenance:

Ensuring adequate certifications for SOAS as an institution, including the relevant insurance; Making sure that these workers are given professional training workshops.

Catering:

Securing contractual hours for casual staff (those on zero hours contracts), and giving them all job security for the future in-house deal. This must be immediate - we cannot wait for next year to end Elio UK's "deliveroo style" precarious contracts!

Page 2

