

Queen's University Belfast Students' Union

Full-Time Student Officer Report

Role: Union President

Name: Beth Elder

Period Covered by Report: November 2023

Introduction

Haigh gach duine,

As President of the Students' Union, I co-ordinate the activity and campaigns of the Students' Union and act as chief spokesperson on behalf of the Union. I work to ensure the Union priorities are enacted and chair several Committees of the Students' Union, such as the Executive Management Committee and Standing Committee.

My areas of focus for the year are co-ordinating the Union Priorities (Housing, Cost of Living, Sustainability, Voter Registration/Student Manifesto, Mental Health, and Student Voice), as well as developing Student Community and Democracy, International Student Supports, and Political Lobbying.

Project Progress

November began with a week of annual leave. During November, I attended and assisted with the Student Representatives Induction, received renewed training from the University Complaints and Appeals team, coordinated and assisted with the NUS-USI Big Student Survey promotion at QSU, and attended an away day for the Shared Island Youth Forum. I also hosted a Student Assembly for the Planetary Crisis, attended my first Senate meeting as President where I spoke up against the reappointment of Hillary Clinton as Chancellor of QUB due to lack of consultation with students, attended the Planning and Finance Committee where I spoke up against the planned increase in Accommodation costs, and finally switched on the Christmas lights.

On Sustainability, I held a Student Assembly on the Planetary Crisis which brought together QUB staff, students, and local community groups to discuss the question 'What should QUB be doing to assist in the Climate and Ecological Crisis'. The main topics covered included formalised, discipline specific and mandatory climate education. At the Students' Union and University Consultative Committee, the Student Officers presented sustainability commitments in a variety of other competing Universities, with an ask to implement mandatory climate education that, designed by students, and to consider embedding discipline specific climate education into every degree programme.

On Cost-of-Living support, after engaging with the University, £33k was allocated from Students' Union financial reserves to run a 'Warm Up With Us' campaign which began in November. Over 2000 hot lunches were handed out to students from a wide range of schools. These consisted of a large portion of hot soup, a bread roll, a cereal bar, and as

much fruit as they wanted, and ended with a raffle to win a prize to help keep warm (hot water bottle, blanket, microwave heat packs). This initiative will continue in the first week in December. There was also an awareness campaign from various organisations on how to heat your home in a cost-effective manner. Additionally, further money was secured from the University for several further initiatives including free big breakfasts and exam time meals. I also spent time lobbying against increasing accommodation fees, and promoting the need for increasing the threshold and eligibility of the accommodation bursaries which is currently only for home students receiving a means tested student loan, with a household income under 25k, which is not reflective of the student population in accommodation, and the need. I have also been investigating statistics around the average age of a student in Higher Education in Northern Ireland for the purpose of lobbying Translink, in partnership with the University, around a student railcard for students outside the y-link age range of 16-24.

I have also spent considerable time in November working towards a formalised process for paid student input in the Strategy work that is ongoing within the University. I also began co-chairing the Strategy 2030 steering group, as a representative for students alongside an academic staff member and a professional services staff member.

Key Events / Meetings

Date	Details of Activity (and outcomes for students)
7 th Nov	Catch-up with Vice President for Students and Corporate Services and director of Student and Campus Life
7 th Nov	Commercial Services Forum
8 th Nov	Sustainable Business Travel Working Group
8 th Nov	Catch-up with QUB UCU Officers
8 th Oct	Academic Council
9 th Nov	Strategy 2030 Education and Student Services Steering Group
9 th Nov	Corporate Governance Review Steering Group
10 th Nov	Student Representative Induction
13 th Nov	Complaints and Appeals Training
13 th Nov	Environmental and Ethical Committee
14 th Nov	Student Survey Promotion with NUS-USI
14 th Nov	Catch-up with acting director of Civic Engagement
15 th Nov	Financial Support Working Group
15 th Nov	Return of Welcome Week Meeting
16 th Nov	Residential Fees Discussion with director of Student and Campus Life
17 th Nov	Shared Island Youth Forum
20 th Nov	Student Assembly: Planetary Crisis
21 st Nov	Senate
21 st Nov	Meeting with the Vice Chancellor
24 th Nov	Catch-up with Vice President for Students and Corporate Services and director of Student and Campus Life
27 th Nov	Planning and Finance Committee
27 th Nov	SU Management Board
30 th Nov	Environmental and Ethical Committee