

Queen's University Belfast Students' Union

Full-Time Student Officer Report

Role: Union President

Name: Beth Elder

Period Covered by Report: December 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

Due to University closures for the holiday period and annual leave, December was a 2 week long month.

The majority of December consisted of preparation for and attendance to senior University meetings such as Senate, where I raised well researched issues with the planned 5-7% increase in QUB Accommodation costs. Ultimately the decision was made to raise the costs, however we achieved an agreement to review the financial support currently in place for students across the University by reviewing the 25k threshold for financial support via the accommodation bursary, – which is out of line with the sector average – and to review support for disproportionately affected groups such as international students.

We also launched a Scam Awareness and Education working group after feedback on increased numbers of students falling victim to scams. This group begun looking at avenues to educate our students, particularly new students and international students who we have seen disproportionately affected, on how to avoid falling victim to scams. This group consists of a wide range of University and Union staff.

I also attended the Governance Review steering group which focused on surveying members of key University committees; Senate and Academic Council, to identify areas of improvement. I also carried out a qualitative interview with a consultant from Advance HE around the effectiveness of Senate and the student input on Senate.

Further to the referendum on Decolonise, Democratise and Demilitarise QUB, I secured a roundtable meeting with key senior management within the University to discuss the impact of the current genocide in Gaza, and the need for action on divestment and ethical procurement, as well as the issues with appointment and reappointment of Chancellor of QUB. This meeting consisted of university senior management, Students' Union Officers, and four students. Conversations around this are ongoing, however we achieved a real commitment to progression on these issues.

Additional work was carried out in the field of Sustainability including discussions with the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for Strategic projects around the use of the arts as a medium for communication about the climate and ecological crisis. The Environmental and Ethical Committee also met to discuss actions for semester two.

Key Events / Meetings

Date	Details of Activity (and outcomes for students)
1 st Dec	Catch-up with NUS-USI President
4 th Dec	Scam Awareness and Education Working Group
5 th Dec	Students' Union Council
6 th Dec	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Workshop
8 th Dec	Governance Review Steering Group
11 th Dec	Roundtable Discussion on the Student Referendum
11 th Dec	Meeting with Pro Vice-Chancellor for Strategic Projects
12 th Dec	Senate
13 th Dec	Executive Management Committee
14 th Dec	Catch-up with Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students