

Queen's University Belfast Students' Union

Full-Time Student Officer Report

Role: Union President

Name: Beth Elder

Period Covered by Report: March 2024

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

March was conference szn, meaning most officers were out of office for two weeks. This coupled with sickness made March a very short month.

The next meeting of the Planning and Finance Committee was held in March. The Students' Union hosted this meeting in The Cube, and I took this opportunity to deliver a 30-minute presentation on the Students' Union and the services we provide. This was key for us as many members of the Planning and Finance Committee are lay members with no connection to the University or the Union, and therefore have little awareness of the scale of support that the Union provides. This committee makes key decisions on financial aspects of the University, including accommodation prices, and therefore have oversight on fees and costs that directly impact students. I also presented on the problems students are currently facing financially, with a detailed breakdown of the average student budget per month and subsequent student debt. This was extremely useful, and many members said they felt humbled.

Additionally, the Queen's Students' Union election results were held – a huge congratulations to Saj, Kieran and Jess for getting re-elected, and to Amy, Eli and Suyi for their elections. The record-breaking voter turnout and fantastic camaraderie was brilliant to see, and I am proud of most candidates. The NUS-USI President elections also occurred, and I would like to congratulate Ben Fiel on winning this election – it is an exciting time for the student movement!

Work on Welcome Week continued, with a final paper brought to Education Committee Student Experience. The proposal for a pilot project of one institutionally controlled day and one school specific social day was passed on an opt-in basis, and work on planning the operational specifics of this will commence after easter.

On Student Activism, I brought a group of students and student officers to a ‘Student Activism over the years’ event in the Linen Hall Library. Here, we discussed priorities for students over the past 100 years, and priorities for students today. We then created posters on specific issues including sustainability, housing, cost of living and difficulties women face in different stages of their lives. These posters will be used in the Linen Hall archives and for a showcase in early May.

I worked with the Student Officer Welfare and the Report and Support team in the University to engage in a Spiking Awareness Day for students, consisting of several stalls in the Students’ Union Foyer where we handed out safety packs and drink covers.

At Academic Council, I did a presentation with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students on the current Academic Year structure and highlighted the pressure points for students. We then facilitated a workshop to discuss what we might do to change this to make things easier for both staff and students. This will be brought to the next Academic Board for student input, and then a group will be pulled together to draft proposed changes to the Academic Year structure.

Finally, the Great Friday Agreement. After months of intense negotiation, research, difficult conversations, and strategy, we put together an agreement of terms that the Students’ Union Executive and Senior University Management are happy with. This agreement was signed by and the Vice President for Strategic Engagement and External Affairs and I and is effective immediately. This is something I am extremely proud of, and I cannot thank the team enough for their patience, engagement, and support on this – especially you Saj <3.

Key Events / Meetings

Date	Details of Activity (and outcomes for students)
1 st March	General Election Briefing Panel
1 st March	Catch up with Vice President for Students and Corporate Services and Director of Student and Campus Life.
6 th March	Planning and Finance Committee
8 th March	QSU Election Results
11 th March	Governance Review Steering Group
12 th March	Education Committee Student Experience
13 th March	Linen Hall Student Activism Event
14 th March	ESS Steering Group for Strategy 2030 – Finance
14 th March	Spiking Awareness Event
15 th March	NUS-USI Election Results
20 th March	Academic Council
20 th – 21 st March	NUS-USI Conference
22 nd March	Meeting with Chief Financial Officer RE Responsible Investment Policy
22 nd March	Staff Excellence Awards
25 th – 28 th March	USI Conference in Sligo

