Queen’s University Belfast Students’ Union President Annual Report 2024-2025

Name: Kieran Minto

Below is not an exhaustive list of wins but what I can pull out as particularly important as key wins:

**Housing co-operatives:** I worked extensively this year with Saj and Jess to develop a workable housing co-op model that would work within NI and within the wider umbrella of the university. I then worked with Saj to socialise the idea first within the union and then to senior management within the university. It was well received and at time of writing we are awaiting a feasibility study from EY before we start looking at housing and getting the project of the ground.

**International relations:** This year was marked by an increased involvement, or more accurately a return to QSU involvement with external politics, including other unions. We hosted productive individual visits from limerick and Brighton SU, alongside the LSE accommodation team. Though our role was reduced in USI we took a leading role in the Russel group SU deciding the direction of the national movement and hosting the conference at Queens.

**Welcome day 2024 and Welcome week 2025:** After the successful implementation of the central welcome day pilot involving 5 schools and over 1000 students full roll-out including all first years from all schools will begin September 2025.

**Successful freshers:** As a team we took part in the planning and event delivery of the largest freshers ever, including the new welcome day.

**Academic year:** I took a key part in designing the new academic year which standardised reading weeks, changed holidays, introduced consolidation weeks and set aside time specifically for welcome and freshers that we are a key part of.

**SU swap shop:** Myself and the Saj took the lead, working closely with Loraine on designing the concept, structure, marketing and implementation of the SU swap shop. We have spent a lot of time integrating it with the pantry and our wider cost of living/sustainability initiatives.

**Lecture recording:** In my first year as education officer, we pushed for a pilot “opt out” (automatic lecture recording) lecture capture policy that was successful and goes into full roll out next year across the uni. This has been something student officers have pushed for years.

**Strategic plan:** I worked with the staff team and specifically the director to write the next 5-year plan and associated budget, I then lobbied UMB and presented to them to get it passed, with an uplift in funding.

**Student Debt & Management:** I was part of the university committee that was tasked with reducing the universities dept exposure due to non-payment of fees. I ensured the group went about it in a fair way for the students.

**Successful elections:** I spent the week of the Election promoting the elections in general instead of specific candidates. Turnout was the second highest of all time with well over 5k votes cast and over 40 candidates.

**Palestine/divestment:** I and the team successfully lobbied all parts of the university to accept the outworkings of the 3D’s campaign, resulting in the first university in the UK and Ireland (in October 2024) to offer a complete package of: an end to direct investments in Arms companies/Israeli companies,scholarships for Palestinian students, places for Palestinian academics, a commitment not to join research or exchange programs with Israeli universities and commitments (that are close to completion) to end indirect investments. We achieved this without an encampment and only minor protest compared to the rest of the UK and Ireland. I also lobbied for the dropping of internal repercussions and the dropping of charges for 3 protestors arrested as part of protests during the global innovation summit held at Queens.

**Officer roles:** I and the team worked to redesign the officer roles, specifically the welfare, C&E and E&D role, then successfully passed the changes. Similarly, we changed the entire structure of council as part of “democracy 3”, completing the largest changes to our democratic systems in 40 years, however Saj took the lead on this.

**Media:** I delivered a number of media appearances throughout the year, including Belfast live interview, a photoshoot with Translink multiple BBC and radio interviews.

**Political lobbying:** I did a lot of politically lobbying in conjunction with NUS-USI for example blocking tuition fee increases, presenting to the department for communities committee at Stormont, a lobby day held in Westminster around a housing bill or presenting to the economy committee at Queens. I also meet with a number of politicians individually to lobby for students in NI.

**Keynotes presentation:** I delivered a number of presentations and keynote speeches externally representing both the union and the university for example at the Evayas conference in trinity.

**Accommodation fees:** I worked closely with Saj, blocking a planned 3-year increase in accommodation fees, with guarantees to work in partnership on the future of funding for accommodation in the new year (these meetings are ongoing).

**Sustainability:**

**Intervarsity:** We successfully took part in lobbying around the first successful intervarsity’s competition between Queens and ulster featuring 8 different teams and a closing ceremony. There was limited engagement from Ulster, however it worked as a successful pilot, and we are now looking at continuing it next year.

**Operation issues in the SU building:** Towards the end of the year the SU building was plagued with issues around cleaning and vermin infestation due to the budget cuts and redundancies. I lobbied estates and UMB to fix the problem and it seems to have subsided.

**SU Awards:** I was involved in the planning of the largest and a very successful SU awards, I also took part in delivering the event.

**Partnership agreement:** We created a partnership agreement with St Marys and Stranmillis college, guarantying commitments from both sides around shared work, membership to committees and joint lobbying on issues. The agreement has been written but not signed yet.

**Tuition fees:** Successfullyworked with NUS-USI to lobby local politicians and especially the economy minister to block a raise in NI tuition fees of £1000 proposed by both the universities and supported by local business groups. This campaign spanned several weeks and involved numerous media engagement. The failure of this proposed increase has sparked a larger conversation on the future of HE funding in NI that the union will play a key part in.

**Childcare fees:** Myself and the Jess have lobbied the university to not eliminate the subsidies that they offer students to use the childcare facilities, which will have a massive negative effect on young mothers especially a number of international PHD students. As part of this we have done media interviews, but the process is ongoing as of writing.

**Gift city:** The gift that keeps on giving. I was part of discussions with Margret topping around gift city and the provision for student voice, student engagement and general student life at the new India branch campus.

**Accommodation fees:** Myself and Saj blocked planed 3-year accommodation fee increase of roughly 15% in total at senate, instead a small increase for next year was approved with guarantees that accommodation would work with the union to look at cost saving measures and a more equitable fee system going forward. This conversation is on-going.

**Senate:** I along with Saj sat on senate this year, representing students during debates and ensuring student voice is heard at the highest level of the university. We also put in a lot of work to ensure the union is seen as an equal partner to the university during decision making.

**Rankings:**

* No. 1 SU in the UK (Whatuni Student Choice Awards 2024, 2025 awards tbc)
* 2nd Best SU in the UK (Student Crowd 2024)
* No. 1 Students’ Union (International Student Barometer) and ranked highest of any area of Queens surveyed.