

Queen's Students' Union: Full-Time Student Officer Report

Role: Student Officer Welfare

Name: Jess Hindley

Period Covered: February 2025

Introduction

As the Welfare Officer, my role is to represent the interests of students in all matters related to their welfare. This is a broad remit which includes improving issues related to housing, accommodation, student safety, physical health, sexual health, mental health, and wellbeing. To achieve this, I lobby relevant departments and people within the university and government; engage with external and internal groups; and lead the Drug and Alcohol Impact (DAI) programme

My main priorities this year are drug and alcohol harm reduction, the Belfast Student Housing Co-Operative, and improving student safety. Due to the intensity of running the DAI programme, I have listed all of its related activities under a separate section of these reports.

General meetings and activities

- **Management Board** - Attended management board to present the work the Students' Union has been undertaking. In particular I discussed the results of the Drug and Alcohol Student Survey
- **NUS-USI Membership Meeting** – Met with representatives from NUS-USI and other NI Students' Unions to share our work over the past month. Prepared for the Higher Education Taskforce
- **Co-operative Student Housing** – Presented options for co-operative student housing to the Executive Management Committee of the Students' Union with the SO Campaigns and Engagement. Also met with the directors of Belfast Student Housing Co-Operatives to discuss our next steps.
- **Academic Services Sweep** – The SO team met with the Director of Academic Services to discuss ongoing academic concerns including the new academic year structure
- **#QUBeWell Management Group** – Meeting to discuss upcoming wellbeing activities. Discussion of overassessment and alternative assessment
- **Student council** – Participated in student council, reported my work to the council, approved societies, listened to student ideas and motions
- **Compassionate Communications** – Prepared for and co-chaired the first meeting of the compassionate communications steering group which is designed for everyone in the university to reconsider how they engage and communicate with students to be as clear and compassionate as possible. The first meeting was introducing the principles to the group and discussing how it could fit in within different areas of the university.
- **Strategic Plan** – Working with the rest of the SO team to make proposed additions/ changes to the first draft of the strategic plan
- **VAWG SU Charter** – Working on creating a working group to discuss additions to the NI SU Charter on Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls.
- **Commercial Services Forum** – Meeting with the SU Shop, SU Bar, and SU Operations Manager to discuss the commercial services within the building, operations, cleaning, and general health and safety concerns.

- **NUS-USI Higher Education Funding Review** – Met with representatives from NUS-USI, and other HE institutions across NI to discuss the upcoming Stormont HE Funding Review. We determined where our areas of focus should be and discussed future plans.
- **Neighbourhood Forum** – Attended a meeting with representatives from the local community, learned about updates from Estates and presented updates on SU plans

Drug and Alcohol Impact programme

- Steering group meeting – Chaired a meeting of the drug and alcohol steering group where we further discussed survey results, survey analysis and preparation for a second survey. We also discussed criteria fulfilment, St Patrick's Day plans, and the upcoming conference.
- Planned a joint event with the University Wellbeing Service for the week before St Patrick's Day to focus on alternatives to alcohol, safer ways to use alcohol, and promote ways to engage with the local community through volunteering.
- Finalised the first draft of our proposed new university policy on student drug and alcohol use and sent it for the first round of consultation. The new policy outlines a harm reduction approach and focuses on student wellbeing, education, and support while recognising legal restrictions.
- As part of a safety campaign that focuses on keeping yourself and your friends safe when going out for the night (whether drinking or not) I proposed changes to the University's Student Safety webpage which we will be promoting.

Events

- **Queen's VS Ulster Varsity Event**– Attended our Varsity Victory event to celebrate the Queen's victory over Ulster
- **Housing Quizzes** – Hosted two Housing Quizzes (in BT1 and BT9) to help educate students on their housing rights
- **European Student Convention** – I attended the European Students' Union (ESU)'s 49th European Student Convention in Galway to learn and discuss more about how various topics including micro-credentials, Assessment, engagement, inclusivity and gender-based violence are handled at different Students' Unions across Europe.