

Queen's Students' Union: Student Officer Report

Annual Report (24/25)

Name: Amy Smith

Role: Postgraduate Education



Training/Conferences

- Throughout May and June, we attended in house officer training to get a grasp of what an officer role is all about. We got handovers from our predecessors which allowed us to see what the job entailed and what a day to day schedule would look like.
- We attended USI Students' Union Training in Tralee over 5 days, networking with other unions in the South. We delved deep into the workings of a National Union and attended sessions on various topics.
- Attended SUT+ in Coleraine, as a continuation from the training received in Tralee. There were many more additional sessions that we could attend to further our knowledge and skills as an officer.
- External Media Training in the city centre. This included scenarios of when we would be caught off guard in an interview and the questions we may face when recording a live interview. It provided us with the skills and knowledge on how best to give interviews to the camera and radio. Our examples included student housing and anti-social behaviour.
- Attended appeals, conduct and complaints training to fully understand these systems and the role of an officer within this.
- Academic Appeals User Acceptance Testing Training took place and it was an insightful way to learn about the new systems in place for appeals.
- Attended the JISC conference learning about how AI can be used to enhance education.
- Attended the Russell Group SU conference in Bristol. This was a brilliant experience to connect with other SUs in the Russell Group about strategies and opportunities their union brings them. We were also able to come together in small focus groups to advance work in areas such as medical students and widening participation.

Academic Reps

- Planning for Faculty and School Reps took place for the undergraduate reps with the help of SU Voice, followed by the training which was held in August.
- Attended Community of Practice meetings throughout the year with the Student Rep Co-Ordinators, discussing rep trainings and the best practice amongst schools according to the NSS scores. Letting them know about school specific trainings that will be happening throughout the year and hearing from them as staff members about the system.
- Delivered the faculty and school rep trainings which was well attended. Included important contacts, school contacts, roles of a rep and plans for the year.
- Prepped for course rep training that was delivered from October to various schools and students.
- Delivered course rep training to Queens College China.
- Hosted the Postgraduate Education Committee for the postgraduate school and faculty reps to support them in their roles. This was a new committee we started us this year to discuss issues in their schools and receive updates on the success of their SVCs so far and offered advice on how to improve.
- The planning and hosting of the new academic rep summit that took place at the beginning of February, with guest speakers and a chance for our reps to network with each other. We focussed on topics surround assessment and feedback and was proven to be successful.
- Academic board took place throughout the year involving insightful discussions such as PG survey and strategic roles of student voice. This was a great way for our reps to connect with university staff.

Committees

- Multiple meetings surrounding video enhanced learning and the upcoming pilot of this. Most staff are now well on board with this and hopefully this will really enhance our students' learning.
- Delivered many induction presentations to various schools from both UG and PG studies, advertising services in the union as well as student rep positions that are available.
- Gave an evaluation of the assessment support hub to the team offering guidance and feedback from student perspectives.
- Attended management board throughout the academic year, giving overviews on the work done so far and updates from an education perspective. We presented plans policies and agendas to this group that were warmly received.
- Attended ECQS and spoke on upcoming news such as a proposed Queen's India campus whilst receiving updates from other directorates in the university.

- Organised an Academic Year workshop with a selection of faculty, school and course reps for the Academic Year Task and Finish Group to gather feedback on structuring and timelines.
- The first SU Council was held in Elmwood hall, in October, addressing many reports and updates as well as holding elections for committees and positions.
- Attended and presented at UMB where we discussed the successes and updates of the Students' Union as a whole. We also presented our strategic plan which was greatly received by questions being asked and general interests in our work.
- Attended Academic Council, receiving presentations on many aspects of the university. This including the successful academic year updates and the other working groups that needed approval.
- Attended the Des and Deans forum receiving presentations on components such as AI and this helped us to understand how AI can be used in education and how we can both be educated and educate staff and students on how this can be useful.
- Co-chaired the first meeting of the Education for the Future working group.
- Presented the our strategic plan at Student and Corporate Services in Elmwood Hall.
- Took part in the student and staff partnership framework in the AHSS faculty, hearing and giving feedback on all of the projects that the partnership supported throughout the year.
- Began a series of monthly meetings with members of the grad school to discuss its usage and plans for the future. Many reviews took place here when it came to the grad school and this work will help the PGs of the future.
- Graduation review task and finish group. Discussions centred around the presentations of parchments and the operation of new gowns and hoods that will hopefully make a difference in this upcoming graduation period.
- Education Committee Student Experience discussing the official university welcome and how this could be improved upon for our prospective students.
- Was a part of the Student Scholarships and Awards Group approving and awarding students. This was a lovely way to give back and help our students by awarding such scholarships.
- Took part in the first PGR advisory committee tackling major PGR issues as well as funding and workshop opportunities.

Other

- Met with the Deans of all three faculties to discuss our plans for the year and get to know them and how they can best assist us. We learned of the struggles each faculty faced last year and their current priorities for the year ahead.
- Attended the Senator George Mitchell dinner alongside the other officers.

- Attended the 'Big Night In' freshers event, playing the movie Shrek, dressing up as characters with the other officers.
- Was part of the panel in shortlisting the Battle of the Bands performers.
- Battle of the Bands event proved to be a smashing success and event that we will definitely run again in the future.
- The SU held free lunches in the foyer for students and officers took part in in person consultation for our students to submit ideas for the years ahead, suggesting improvements for what they see essential to the running of the SU.
- Took part in the staff excellence awards judging panel where the panel dwindled 277 applications down to the final shortlist.
- Had meetings with multiple schools surrounding placement students and the issues they are having in relation to my upcoming placement survey.
- SU Elections took place and we received our second highest turn out with 5,397 total voters.
- Attended the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Charter Launch at NUS-USI alongside the other unions in the region.
- The staff excellence awards event was held celebrating staff successes. This year saw the first ever student choice award.

Conclusion

Overall, this academic year has marked a period of significant engagement and achievement for Queen's Students' Union. Through comprehensive officer training, participation in national conferences, and established representation systems, we've strengthened our capacity to advocate for student interests. The development of our academic representation structure, in both undergraduate to postgraduate levels, has enhanced student voice across all levels of the university, resulting in innovative initiatives like the Academic Rep Summit.

Our strategic contributions to university governance have been substantial and well-received, particularly in areas such as video-enhanced learning, the academic year calendar, and postgraduate support in general. Community building efforts through events like Battle of the Bands and the Big Night In has fostered a more connected student experience. With record election participation and successful creation of our strategic plan, we have laid strong foundations for continued growth and impact in the coming year, reinforcing our commitment to representing, supporting, and enhancing the student experience at Queen's. I look forward to working with you all next year.