

Annual Business Report



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Hello Councillors 😊

Time has really flown-by fast! This will be the final report I will present to QUBSU council. I've spent 5 years on council, 2 of them a being your VP Equality & Diversity, and it has been an honour. I would have never dreamed of all the things I have gotten to do through this role, representing you.

Over the past 2 years, I have learnt so much, met such amazing people, and been proud to represent students across our university on a local and national level. It hasn't always been the easiest of circumstances, but we have had some MASSIVE wins (just abortion rights & marriage equality no big deal), and some curveballs no one could have seen coming (just 2 strikes and a pandemic). I have always centred liberation at the heart of all my work, be it in campaigning and organising, or in policy work, and I hope I have done our union and you, our students, justice in my work.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the amazing people in our union have done so much amazing work and been a huge source of support to me.

The Student Voice Team- Damien, Tina, Louise & Kate, thank you for making this union a home away from home to me, for being there for every meltdown and finding ways to fix things when they went wrong, and for nurturing the organiser in me. My time in QUBSU would be nothing without you guys!

My 2 Sabb Teams- We have been through some crazy times together, I could not thank you all enough for the support, love & being such a constant through everything we've navigated together. I'm, so excited to see all the amazing things we will go on to do!

The SU Operations Team & Staff- You guys make this union go round, the support and advice you have all given me throughout these 2 years has been invaluable, and I am so thankful for it. A special shout-out to Eamonn, Seán and Phil for always going out of the way to help me with all my campaign logistics amidst my meltdowns! 😊

And last, but not least, you, the students. Thank you for trusting me to represent you, and electing me twice to be your VP Equality & Diversity.

For one last time,
In Unity,

Hamsavani Rajeswaren

Highlights

→ Belfast Pride

- Biggest student bloc to date
- Hosted pre-pride parade breakfast in QUBSU, welcoming all students from across USI & NUS-USI
- Banner drop outside the SU well received by students
- Involved student societies in wider Belfast Pride events by the LGBT+ sector.

→ International Buddy Scheme

- Semester 1 & 2 Meet-ups executed
- Renewed funding from MRCI for an intern
- New eco-friendly branded merch
- Review of scheme & focus groups for feedback

→ Project Choice

- Key representation of student voice in national campaigns for decriminalisation & access by Alliance For Choice
- Part of lobbying efforts in lead up to abortion access consultation
- Submitted response to consultation & lobbied relevant government representatives
- Hosted International Women's Day events in solidarity with UCU and the national Women's Strike Assembly
- Nominated for Equality Campaign of The Year, and USI's SAAI

→ Decolonisation

- Commitment from the university into investigating the BAME Attainment Gap, and receiving relevant data to research the gap
- Working with various academics across faculties on what decolonisation looks like in practice for different disciplines
- Normalising the language of decolonisation.
- Setting up a formal network between UCU & QUBSU to take forward the campaign and put together a manifesto for the work
- Running workshops for students and staff to engage with and educate on decolonisation.

*** This project unfortunately has not been completed despite very encouraging initial meetings and plans, due to COVID19. However I will be working to hand the project over to UCU, and my successor and the incoming BAME officer.*

→ Black History Month

- Co-hosted with QUB iRISE and ACS this year
- Delivered bigger & better events with excellent attendance and outstanding feedback
- Hosted guest speakers from England & ROI for events attracting wider community participation
- Was covered by various media on the work we were doing through the campaign and pioneering discussions of anti-racism institutionally

→ Beyond The Binaries

- 2nd successful Beyond the Binaries week, co-hosted with Trans Officer, Kit Penlington & LGBT+ Society
- Events were well attended, and well-received
- Trans students appreciated the fact the campaign had certain events that were safe spaces for Trans & NB students
- Highlighted the many layers of transphobia inherent in the university that still persist despite the introduction of Trans equality policy by the university.

→ LGBT+ History Month

- Hosted with Elliot Beever, your LGBT+ Officer, and the LGBT+ Society
- Dedicate this campaign to my close friend, writer, and LGBT+ rights advocate, the late Lyra McKee.
- A series of talks, panel discussions & film screening events throughout the month around the theme of recognising the contributions of the Queer community at Queen's and institutional history
- Well received and garnered interest from LGBT+ sector on working together for future campaigns

→ UCU Strikes

-Worked with UCU to host a range of events and solidarity actions for students to get involved in. These include- organising actions of solidarity from student groups with UCU; Humans of the Picket Campaign, Feminist Picket Rally, and a Decolonisation Workshop for the Alternative University programme.

As students, our struggles are always interconnected with those of the workers in our institutions. The UCU strikes this year have taught us that the system we exist within is beyond broken, and COVID19 has only showed us that the institution is inaccessible and built for profit, not its people. We must continue our long-standing and proud tradition of standing together with UCU & other trade unions to build campaigns for workers rights!

→ Open Iftar

As the university rapidly diversifies, we have had a large and vibrant community of Muslim students on campus. These students tend to traditionally not engage with the union, and often are not very visible as a community on campus due to isolation and segregation. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting (sawm), prayer, reflection and community. During this time Muslim students often fast for over 12 hours a day- from dawn till dusk.

Hosting an Open Iftar with the International Students' Officer, Adam Farhan, and the QUB ISoc, we hoped to bring the Muslim community together, and create a space for them- celebrating their traditions, and helping other students understand and learn more about Ramadan.

*** This project unfortunately has not been completed despite very encouraging initial meetings and plans, due to COVID19.*

Conferences/Events

- Students' Union Training 2019
- Peace By Peace Conference: Queer perspectives on peacebuilding
- NUS Black Students' Winter Conference
- USI Pink Training
- APPG for International Students- House of Commons
- USI Empower- Conference for Ethnic Minority Students
- NUS National Conference (*Virtual due to COVID19)
- NUS-USI Conference (*Virtual due to COVID19)
- USI Congress (*Virtual due to COVID19)
- NUS Liberation Conference (*Virtual due to COVID19)

The above report briefly outlines some of the main campaigns, engagements & conferences I attended over the past year. More in depth accounts of all the work I have engaged in over the past year can be found in my officer reports over the past year.

Thank you once again for giving me the opportunity to be your VP Equality & Diversity. The 17-year old that came to this university 6 years ago would have never believed an international student, let alone a woman of colour could ever access the spaces I have been honoured to be in. I know this representation has made a difference to many students from liberation backgrounds like myself, and I hope that we continue to see our union diversify and be the radical, political union I have known it to be.

Uppa Students! 😊