Queen's University Belfast Students' Union

Officer Report

Student Officer Postgraduate

Gift Sotonye-Frank

Period Covered By Report: *1 May 2020 – 30 June 2020*

Hello everyone,

This is my last report as your Postgraduate Students' officer. Like everyone else, I would never have envisaged the level of disruption to normal living as a result of COVID-19. For some of you, it has meant, bereavement, loss of income and difficulty reaching your academic expectations. As a Students' Union, we worked tirelessly to ensure that we were bringing forward the issues you raised to the relevant services and department to ensure that your welfare was priority. The Officer team made every effort to ensure students were ably represented at different meetings and that your voices were heard by the University and beyond during lockdown. I have outlined below some of my activities during the months of May and June.
Check out my previous reports for 20?19/20 at https://qubsu.org/studentvoice/StudentCouncil/OfficerReports/

Month	Events/Meetings Except where stated, all events/meetings were held virtually
1/5/20	PG Students' Working Group Meeting
4/5/20	Officer Team Sweeps every Monday @4pm
5/5/20	Meeting with Voice Team every Tuesday @10:30 am.
5/5/20	International Students' Sabbatical Officer Team Meetings every Fortnight @ 3:30 pm
5/5/20	Courses and Regulations Group
6/5/20	Collaborative Provision Group
7/5/20	USI Academic Affairs Working Group.
7/5/20	EMC
13/5/20	PGR Sub group meeting every Wednesday @11am
13/5/20	Meeting with Kara Bailie and Margaret Topping to discuss SO Postgraduate report of the Impact of COVID-19 on PGRs

15/5/20	UCU/SU meeting Follow Up meeting on Impact of COVID-19 on PGRs with Graduate School Manager
17/5/20	AHSS PVC's Meeting
	Research and Postgraduate Committee
	PG Students' working group meeting
20/5/20	AHSS PG Education Committee
21/5/20	Meeting with Kara Bailie and Margaret Topping repeats weekly at 4pm.
25-27/05/20	USI Congress
25/5/20	Education Committee Meeting
26/5/20	Student-Supervisor Relationship Working Group Meeting
27/5/20	June Rep Elections Discussion with Marketing Team
	NUS Women's Caucus Liberation Conference
	SAAL Awards
28/5/20	Joint Meeting with Graduate School Management and Students Meeting with Ciaran O'Kelly, Director of Graduate Studies- School of Law
2/6/20	NUS-USI meeting repeats Fortnightly
3/6/20	Fresher's Fair Planning
	Finalised plan for Student-Supervisor Workshop
8/6/20	Student-Supervisor Relationship Webinar
	1-2-1 meeting with student
	Meeting with Dean of Graduate School
10/6/20	Academic Council
	USI Crossover Training
11/6/20	Decolonising the Curriculum
	Meeting with Karen Morrison (MHLS)
16/6/20	AHSS Staff-Student Partnership Group
17/6/20	AHSS PG Education and Research Committee
	Meeting with incoming SO Postgraduate- Tasha Montgomery
19/6/20	Meeting with SU Director, Ciaran Higgins, on Black Lives Matter
25/6/20	AHSS PGT Town hall meeting
	SU Staff Team meeting
	SU Officer Team Meeting @ QUBSU building
29/6/20	SSAAG Meeting

Progress on the Report of the impact of Covid-19 on PGRs.

Since my last report, there has been some actions taken by the University in trying to respond to the recommendations made in that report. The actions consist of the following:

- Involvement of the SO Postgraduate at PGR subgroup
- 3 additional months of registration (6 months for part-time students). This additional time will not incur additional tuition fees or other charges.
- Closely worked with the Department for the Economy, another major funder for PGR students at Queen's and additional funds secured from DfE for PGR extensions.
- Regular Update of the PG FAQs.
- Return to laboratories
- Access to library collections.
- Access to McClay Library study spaces from 3rd of August in line with social distancing rules for staff and student safety, equality, and consideration of different circumstances
- Increased staff and PG students town hall meetings through MS Teams.

Library Opening Hours
The McClay library will be opening from the 3rd of August to enable PGT students access resources whilst writing their dissertation. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, certain measures have been put in place and the capacity to accommodate students has hugely reduced because of the 2meter socil distance regulation. Accordingly, the library will not have the original capacity to accommodate as many staff and students as it would have done previously. The good news is that there will be regular reviewing of the provisions made in line with the government regulations on COVID-19.

Launch of Student-Supervisor Relationship Toolkit
On the 8th of June, 2020 the the QUBSU and Graduate School Partnership Project-Student Supervisor Relationship Toolkit was Launched. This project which has been a year long project was launched during a webinar titled the Student-Supervisor Relationship which was co-hosted by the SO-postgraduate. The event had over 75 people in attendance. The toolkit can be accessed at https://qubsu.org/studentvoice/studentsupervisorrelationshiptoolkit/

PG School Rep Elections
In June School Rep Elections were conducted but they were primarily focused on Undergraduate students. The reason for this was that the current cohort of PGT students will significantly be different with a new intake in September. Accordingly, the Elections will be held in September to ensure that both PGT and PGR students whether returning or new students are equally able to participate in the PG school rep elections.

International Students Sabbatical Officers Meeting
At the outbreak of COVID-19, International students who are sabbatical officer have met fortnightly as part of building a community and to discuss issues that are directly relevant to international students. SO Postgraduate has been regularly attending the meetings. One of the outcomes of thae meetings is an open letter written to the Home secretary Ms. Patel outlining some of the challenges which have resulted from

changes in the immigration rules. The letter is currently in circulation for signing by international students who are sabbatical officers.

National Conferences

In May/June 2020, I was part of the delegation attending several national conferences such i.e. USI Congress, NUS-USI conference, and NUS Liberation Conference.. A major part of the se conferences included voting for certain policies to be upheld and also election of the incoming national officers for the 2020/21 academic session. May I congratulate every incoming national officer for the election victory. Wishing them every success for the year ahead.

Delivered Crossover Training to USI Incoming Officers

On the 10th of June, I had the honour of delivering crossover training to incoming USI student officers focusing on the essential guide for supporting postgraduate students.

Committees and Working Groups

Below is a list of committees and Working groups I sit on. I have been in attendance in most meetings that have been called and always listening and contributing in ways that are beneficial to the study body but in particular to the postgraduate community that I represent always ensuring you're your interest is well presented, and protected.

- Academic Board
- Academic Council
- Collaborative Provision Group
- Courses and Regulations Group
- Education Committee
- Research and Postgraduate Committee
- Executive Management Committee
- Management Board
- MHLS Postgraduate Education Sub-Group
- Postgraduate Advisory Board
- Postgraduate Forum
- Student Partnership Project Group
- Supporting Student Attainment Action Group
- Internationalisation of the Curriculum

Appreciation

I would like to first of all thank God Almighty who was my light and stay throughout the year. Thank you also to every one that supported me in particular ways to achieve success I particularly want to thank all the staff of the Queens Students Union. They have been very helpful in making my job possible to them I say a massive thank you. My thanks also goes to the staff at Graduate School, you worked very closely with me to ensure that Postgraduate students welfare was priority. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience.