



UUSU

IMPACT

REPORT

REPRESENT, SUPPORT & CONNECT YOU!



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We're here to Represent, Support and Connect you while you are studying at UU. This year we have been working tirelessly for positive change for all our students and creating spaces for students to engage and get involved.

Our main campaigns this year revolved around creating a campus community and addressing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our students.

We have also just launched a new strategy for 2024-9 (read on to the next page to find out more).



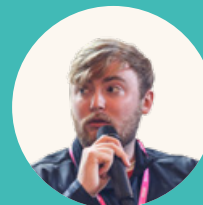
Rebecca Allen
President



Oluwaseyi Kushimo
VP Belfast



Philip Maguire
VP Coleraine



Dónall Ó hÉigearthaigh
VP Magee



Finola Quigg
VP Education



Oscar Kelly
VP Equality & Belonging



Reece Armstrong
VP Sport & Wellbeing

Let's give you a snapshot of what your Students' Union has been doing for students this year.





New Strategy

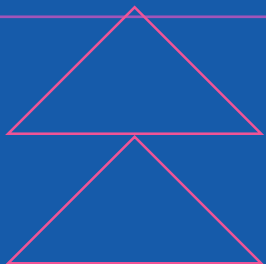
We have officially launched our new Strategic Direction for 2024-29. This new and ambitious strategy outlines the goals and initiatives we will take and our renewed commitment to represent, support and connect all our members, both during their time at Ulster and into the future.

This strategy was developed by engaging with our members, online and in-person, to understand about what they want to see from their Union and what they want our priorities to be.

UUSU President Rebecca Allen said:

"I want to thank our members for engaging in the development of this strategy. You took the time to tell us in no uncertain terms about your experiences of university life, the challenges you have faced and what you want to see from your Students' Union.

I hope that all students and postgraduate researchers can see their experiences reflected in this strategy and it can clearly sets out see how they will benefit from our commitments to them."



The full strategy can be read or downloaded via our website.

UUSU's commitments to our members including:

- Ensuring student communities have a strong voice.
- Representing the views of our members on the issues that impact them.
- Strategic mental health and wellbeing support.
- Streamlined communications and innovative means of receiving authentic feedback.
- Opportunities for social engagement and a sense of belonging for all of our diverse membership.

Learning from our previous strategies as well as unpredictable challenges like the global COVID pandemic and an ongoing cost of living crisis has led UUSU to creating an adaptive and interchangeable strategic direction. This will ensure that UUSU can be where members need them most. UUSU President, Rebecca Allen further commented:

"Over the 5 years of this strategy, our membership and their needs will inevitably change. We want this strategy to allow us to shift and pivot with our membership so that we will always be ready to represent, support and connect them. We hope that this strategy will mean that we are always where our members need us to be, when they need us there, and as a result enable us to continue to represent, connect and support them in the most effective possible way."

In keeping with our commitment to engage and reflect the diversity of our membership, for the first time, we have published an Irish language version of this strategy. This contributes to our Irish language policy and increasing the ways in which Irish language speakers can engage with their Union. Reflecting our adaptive and flexible approach, we will continue to increase the visibility of the Irish and Ulster Scots languages in cultural events and on-campus resources.



Representation

Representing and lobbying on your behalf across the most important and influential University committees and working groups responsible for delivering a quality student experience, such as:-

Academic standards

Student support & well-being

University governance

Campus experience

Learning & teaching

Equality & belonging

In October we held our course reps and student council elections. The election of the student council is particularly important time of the year for UUSU because of the central role of Student Council in reflecting the views of our membership through the creation of UUSU policies.

This year we've had a fantastic level of academic representation with over 800 students taking up the course, school, and faculty rep roles. These students have dedicated over 24,000 hours to their roles, which is fantastic.

In March we held our leadership elections for the 2024-5 academic year. We had the highest ever turn out for our online elections. 19,021 votes cast! Your full-time student officers, faculty and school reps were also elected by you for the forthcoming academic year.

**19,021
VOTES CAST!**

Elected Student Executive Team 24/25



**Ethan
Davies**
President



**Amensinor
Favour Okpohs**
VP Belfast



**Chris
Murray**
VP Coleraine



**Daniel
Sanusi**
VP Equality &
Belonging



**Conor
O'Hagan**
VP Sport &
Wellbeing



**Emily
Roberts**
VP Education



**Reece
Armstrong**
VP Magee



Representation

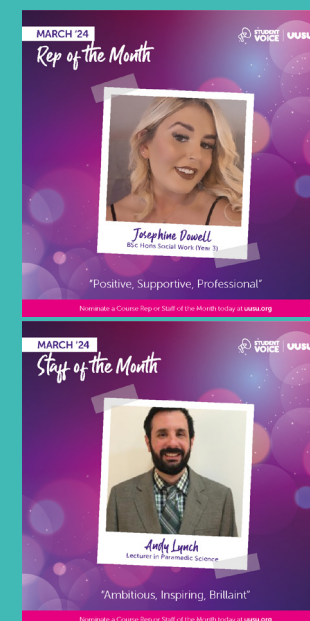


Post graduate Researcher Connect

This year we continued our work to support the Postgraduate Researcher experience with enhanced communication with this researcher community, spotlighting the educational support provided by PhD researchers through the Learning and Teaching Awards and developing partnerships with the Doctoral College.

We have celebrated the success and impact of our volunteers with Rep and Staff Member of the Month and have highlighted examples of academic rep impact on the day to day class experience, improved communication with Course Teams, improved academic support, responses to timetabling issues and more.

Rep and Staff of the Month



Student Council

- 3 Quorum Council Meetings.
- Bye Law Review - In November Student Council and Trustee Board passed a review into the rules governing our union, as part of efforts to ensure UUSU remains up to date and working for everyone.



Three New Policies

3 New Policies (Childcare / Crèche Facilities, Inclusive Protection and Sexual Health Education and Changemaker Assemblies).

These three new policies will ensure that we :-

- Remain committed to lobbying for a not for profit childcare facility on each campus.
- UUSU Is actively involved in promoting safer sex, better education and ensuring SHAG (Sexual Health and Guidance Week) is a mainstay in the UUSU Calendar for years to come.
- Make change within our university and wider society with the ongoing development of new student changemaker assemblies.
- 1 National Policy Introduced - UUSU drove the way in ensuring childcare was on the agenda within NUS-USI our union within Northern Ireland, ensuring that the work of Student Council could be taken to the next level and into the regional and national conversation.



National Student Conferences

We hosted elections to select students to attend the National Union of Students, Union of student in Ireland and NUS-USI conferences.



Student Achievement Awards Ireland!

Academic Representative of the Year Brooke Stewart (School of Sport Rep)

Photo: Rebecca Allen (UUSU President) collected the award on Brooke's behalf.



Survey

We want our members to be at the heart of our work and to tell us how they want to engage with UUSU and what they think our priorities should be.

Our end of year survey has just closed with over 1,200 respondents completing the survey. We will use the survey data to ensure our students' voices are heard in shaping our future work.





Learning & Teaching Awards



The UUSU Learning & Teaching Awards aim to recognize and celebrate our outstanding staff and academic reps across a range of categories supporting the student journey at Ulster University.



What makes these awards stand out is they are completely student-led, organized, and managed through Ulster University Students' Union. Nominations come from students, with staff only eligible to submit in the Academic Rep category.

We received over 500 nominations this year showing the impact of hundreds of individual staff members, teams, and reps. The judging and shortlisting panel was made up of student reps from across Faculties and the Doctoral College.

Many thanks to our student and PGR shortlisting panel. With over 500 submissions across categories this was no easy task.



INSPIRATIONAL AWARD
Dr Donna Towe, Department of Management, Leadership & Marketing



EXCELLENCE IN SUPPORT OF STUDENT AMBITION
Dr Idongesit Ekerete, School of Computing



PHD RESEARCHER SUPERVISOR OF THE YEAR
Professor Dewar Finlay, School of Engineering



INCLUSION & BELONGING CHAMPION
Dr. Paul Joseph-Richard, Department of Management, Leadership & Marketing



STAFF TEAM OF THE YEAR
Cataract and Refractive Surgery Teaching Team, School of Biomedical Sciences



EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR (LHS)
Marinus Toman, School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems



OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO STUDENT LIFE (NON-TEACHING)
Sam Scott & Sara Wilson, Estates & Noonan



EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR (CEBE)
Marinus Toman, School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems



STUDENT ACADEMIC REP OF THE YEAR
Hannah McAleavey & Martin McCarthy, Department of Management, Leadership & Marketing



EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR (AHSS)
Deborah White, Belfast School of Art



Cost of Survival

We are facing the worst cost of living crisis in 40 years.



Students' incomes haven't increased with inflation for over a decade. UUSU continues to promote the NUS-USI campaign where students are demanding...

A cost of living payment

A rent freeze

Free or subsidized transport

University Ulster has continued to offer free graduations this year after lobbying from UUSU last academic year.



Food Bank



To help with the cost of living crisis, we have set up an initiative whereby we collect pre packed sandwiches with a short shelf life from on campus catering and store them in Food Bank branded fridges within the Students' Union.

The sandwiches are still within date and help greatly with students struggling to make ends meet. Not only does the initiative help students in hardship but also helps sustainability on campus.

FREE Breakfast

This year we have introduced FREE breakfasts across all our campuses to help with the cost of living.

- 6,000 cups of tea
- 5,000 cups of coffee
- 2,000 litres of milk
- 2,250 bowls of porridge
- 7,750 cereal bars
- All cups, spoons, and materials recyclable



UUSU FREE Lunches

We hopefully will secure funding to offer FREE lunches to students in the forthcoming academic year.



Mental Health Campaign



UBelong

We know that isolation and loneliness is one of the biggest factors in negatively impacting student mental health. Our student and society events create communities and offer spaces for students to come together.

We encourage students to find their social groups in societies and sports teams throughout the year particularly at the start of the new academic year through the freshers' fayre and the start of Semester 2 with the refreshers' fayre.



Kidz Farm on campus

Our UBelong events and activities ensure that the support and opportunities are in place for students to thrive at UU.

As part of our stress-less campaign, UUSU provided tea, coffee and hot chocolate during our 'Brew Monday' sessions outside the library on each campus.

Kidz Farm and puppies on campus helped de-stress students around assignments and exam time. We also support the National Student Campaigns throughout the year which effect the general student body.



Advice Bureau

Our small team of experienced advisors dealt with 600 plus Student Cases and 100-200 enquiries within the last 12 months across all 3 Ulster University Campuses.

Main issues were Academic Appeals & Course Matters, Housing & Tenancy issues, Cost of Living, Student Finance & Fees, International Student issues & University Complaints.

600+
Student
Cases Dealt
With



Student Thanks

"I wanted to share the good news with yourself that the panel are allowing me to return to my studies and I owe such a massive thank you for all your assistance and advice throughout it was of immense help to me, forever grateful. You're the best!"

"All issues related to my study as well as health which I confronted in my last semester have been resolved. I have also given my resit exam and now I have passed my all modules and successfully completed my course. Thanks a lot for that because without help of you, I couldn't do this. Once Again, thank you."

"Your guidance and expertise were instrumental in helping me navigate the complex University processes. Your dedication to our case, thoughtful advice, and unwavering support were nothing short of exceptional. You not only provided me with invaluable insights but also gave me the confidence to present my case effectively."

"I am profoundly grateful for the time you invested in understanding the nuances of my situation and the effort you put into crafting a compelling argument. I could not have asked for a more dedicated and knowledgeable advisor."

"I am incredibly happy that I can proceed into final year and I am looking forward to it also, thank you again for all of your assistance and advice. It has been amazing to realise how much support there is at university... that has really helped my anxiety about academia a lot! See you in the next academic term."

"I wanted to reach out and express my sincere gratitude. I received the payment from the University fund. I appreciate your help. Your assistance has been a tremendous relief, and I cannot thank you enough."



Sustainability

Sustainability has been one of our long running campaigns directed by Student Council.

Green Week in November included a host of events, including Wellbeing Garden activities, Vintage Clothes Sales, Beach Clean and Book Swap to name a few.



Wellbeing Garden

Our wellbeing garden in Magee has been going for several years. However, we've recently got a wellbeing garden up and running with volunteers in Coleraine. The Belfast well-being garden will be launched in September.



Philip Maguire (VP Coleraine), Caitlyn Musollino, & Cathal McArdle (Volunteering & Events Coordinator)

Hazaar

In partnership with the University, UUSU signed up to Hazaar. Hazaar is a pre-loved marketplace created by students for students. Pop up markets gave students the opportunity to sell their pre-loved or handmade items on campus.

- 800+ students registered with the potential to earn.
- Over 67 students signed up to sell at Hazaar pop-up markets.
- Employed over 10 students across all 3 campuses.
- Gave incredible work experience for students, enhancing post university career prospects.
- Welcomed students to Ulster's circular economy in a way that saves students money.



Sexual Health & Guidance Week

Sexual Health and Consent Education is vital. Sexual Health and Guidance Week continued this year after being reintroduced last year. SHAG fayres will local sexual health services and we had an incredible turn out for Sex Toy Bingo!



Student Safety

Student Safety has been a long running campaign within UUSU.

This year we focused on our stop spiking and strut safe campaigns.



Seachtain na Gaeilge 2024

Our Seachtain na Gaeilge 2024 campaign provided opportunities for all students to get involved through a Language Café, Irish taster classes, Cómhra agus Craft & more!

The campaign won on the Feachtas Gaelige na bliana category in the USI Student Achievement Awards Ireland.



**Equality, Diversity
& Inclusion**



We are committed to creating a more inclusive and empowering environment for all.

We have:-

- Proudly represented students and the Belfast and Foyle Pride Parades.
- Passed a childcare policy by Student Council which enabled crucial groundwork to be done in providing better childcare for student parents. This included working with the University on creating committees to discuss reintroduction of campus crèches.
- Brought a childcare policy to the national level through NUS-USI which was passed. This means that NUS-USI will push for additional government funding to help students who are parents, especially funding for post graduate, part time and international students who don't have the same support and access to grants.
- Worked with students on the SWAN network (Students with Additional Needs Network) to see how UUSU could most benefit students with additional needs.
- Worked with Dean of EDI for accessibility improvements e.g., Belfast accessible bathrooms were made more wheelchair friendly
- Worked with University to ensure that sanitary products are accessible within all campus bathrooms.
- Worked with the University to highlight issues with their preferred name change systems, and how best to make the system more understandable and accessible for students so they can feel supported to be who they are, as well as ongoing work on titles and pronouns.

“Together, let us challenge biases, breakdown barriers, and create a community where everyone feels valued, respected, and included.”



Oscar Kelly,
VP Quality
& Belonging

- Worked with the University on the Advance HE Wellbeing & Belonging Project which has created a staff/student tool kit launching in September 24. This tool kit contains information for staff to implement into their classes to improve their student mental health and sense of belonging. It also contains information for students such as videos helping placement students get back on track, 'bridging the gap' information for late enrollers, helping first year international students and student led inductions.
- Worked with external organisations such as YGAM who gave information and workshops to our students around gambling and gaming awareness. Worked with Guide Dogs NI to facilitate stalls and workshops around guide dogs and people with sight loss.
- Worked with the University around the Race Equality Charter which looks at the issues and barriers that BAME+ and international students, face and how best to support these students.
- Supported and facilitated post graduate researchers with running an LGBTQIA+ event for both students and staff around the book 'Queering the green' in collaboration with the LGBTQ+ student society, the LGBTQ+ staff network and the English Department.



UUSU at Foyle Pride 2023



Connect

Through our clubs and societies students can make friends and connect with their fellow students.



Activities and Societies

Throughout the academic year the Student Activities team hosted a variety of events for you to enjoy in addition to supporting societies. Societies have gone from strength to strength, leading on key events throughout the year including Freshers, Halloween, and Christmas.

97 active societies.

Membership of socs has increased substantially over 3,800 students.

Campaign Events

We've co-hosted campaign events and ensured that our student spaces are safe and inclusive areas where you can kick back, learn new skills, embrace new interests, celebrate faith and share in cultural celebrations.

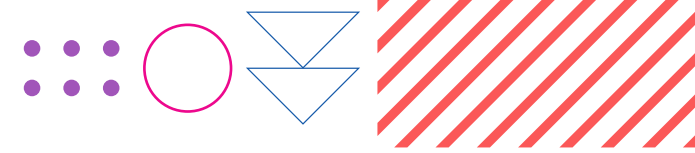
400 society events took place.

Coleraine Bar Refurbishment

The substantial Coleraine Students' Union Bar refurbishment starts next month. Additional work and sound equipment will be included in this upgrade to the student bar.

We have been leading on the design of the refurbishment, directing and advising on the best environment for our students to relax and connect together in.





SU Awards

SU Awards '24

In this year's SU Awards we recognised and celebrated those students who contributed so much of their time, energy and expertise to improving the student experience.



Outstanding Society (Trad Soc Magee)



Course Based Society of the Year (Biosoc, Coleraine)



Most Improved Society
(English and Poetry Society, Coleraine)



Committee Member of the Year
(Geraldine Doherty, Doctoral Society Belfast)



Most Impressive Online Presence KPOP (Belfast)
Joint Winner



Society Member of the Year
(Jess Quail, Biosoc & CU Magee)





UUSU Sport has gone from strength to strength this year with 12% yearly increase in sports club membership with 1,800 sports club members.

There have also been 5 new clubs set up at Magee. The teams have won 35 Trophies this year to date, and we've had 35 finalists and medallists.

Dr John 'Tommy Joe' Farrell was the happiest man in Austin Stack Park after his beloved Ulster University regained the Sigerson Cup after a 16-year wait:

"This is our 50th anniversary. You dream of things like this. I said boys "I'm dreaming to win a Sigerson Cup in our 50th anniversary and they've done it."



UUSU President Rebecca Allen presents with the Presidents' Plate Kate O'Connor (Athletics)



Prof. Cathy Gormley-Heenan (Provost) presents Club of the Year 2024 to Gaelic Football Mens' Belfast



Bill Clarke Team of the Year 2024: Gaelic Football Mens' Sigerson Cup Team

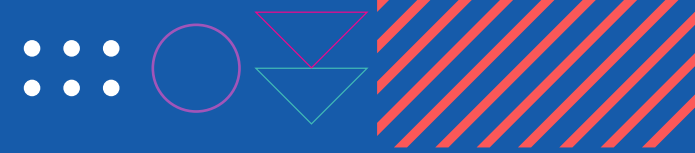
Sigerson Team 2024



Ulster University Basketball Varsities B Champions 2024



Trophy Parade Colours 2024



Volunteering

Charity of the Year

**Student Council nominated
The British Red Cross as UUSU's
chosen charity for 2024.**

UUSU is committed to supporting humanitarian relief in Gaza and to help with this, it has been decided that all funds raised throughout the year will go towards the Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory Appeal organised by the British Red Cross.



Mission Christmas

For a number of years UUSU has been volunteering for Mission Christmas. Mission Christmas is an annual project driven by the charity Cash for Kids. They help children across the UK who need it most, especially those affected by poverty, illness or neglect. Every year Mission Christmas aims to create a Christmas for every child.

Students, Students' Union and University staff spent a day volunteering at Mission Christmas headquarters in December 2024.

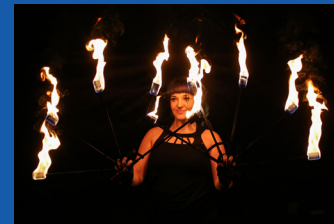


Beltane 2024

UUSU in partnership with Stendhal brought our first summer music festival to the Magee Campus.



BELTANE FESTIVAL





Beltane 2024



**BELTANE
FESTIVAL**



Dónall Ó hÉigearthaigh
(UUSU Vice President Magee) said:



"We wanted to plan something big and ambitious to celebrate all that student life at Magee brings to the city of Derry. From initial planning in the Students' Union office our vision for Beltane grew into one of the biggest events UUSU put together. Although we were new to organising festivals, and this was the first time we'd delivered an event of this magnitude, we didn't let that hold us back."

The Beltane Festival was an incredible event for our students and the wide range of performers. We brought together an incredible mix of local and up-and-coming artists, covering so many genres from Trad to Jazz and from Rock to Comedy. It was an exciting way to celebrate the end the year and Magee than with this fantastic festival"



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