

VOTE

BETHANY FOR WELFARE

VOTE AT
QUBSU.ORG
FROM THE 1ST
- 4TH MARCH

- FIGHTING FOR BETTER HOUSING
- ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
- IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE HARDSHIP FUND
- REFORMING EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
- AND MORE...



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Who Am I?

I am a final year Law student and a seasoned campaigner, within our university and beyond.

I am this year's RAG Chairperson. I'd like to keep strong links with our chosen charities, Belfast Samaritans and Save the Children NI. They do fantastic work improving mental health networks and helping families directly, which is invaluable for the student community.

I have been a proud and avid member of Project Choice for the past 3 years, campaigning for reproductive rights across Ireland. I'm also a member of the Climate Action Group, as I believe a safe and sustainable university is essential for student's development in the future.

Within the past year I've also been involved with the Students Deserve Better Campaign. I have lobbied for students to access rent breaks and relief for those unable to use accommodation, financial aid such as the COVID Disruption Payment, and academic safety net policies to help relieve stress.

Why Am I Running?

I'm running because it is time that student struggles were heard. Throughout my time at Queens, I have seen first-hand the unique difficulties students face.

It has never been clearer that students are feeling stressed, burnt out and alone. We are tired of being treated like customers. Our university needs to be reminded that we as students play a vital role within our institution.

I want to advocate for you and the university experience you deserve. I believe every student should have access to better housing, mental health services, financial aid and academic support. Let's rethink student well-being, our way!



Mental Health Services

Around 1 in 3 university students experience mental health issues for which they need professional help. QUB has increased their awareness of mental health issues, but we need action instead. Our counselling services are in severe need of improvement. Our waiting lists are inundated with students in need, who are only granted four counselling sessions. For those in crisis, this is unattainable and unacceptable.

We need to ensure that course and school reps, personal tutors and all other members of staff who engage with students are trained in mental health first aid, to ensure students are reaching out to people they can rely on. I would encourage the university to continue its OMNI reports so that they can see an accurate representation of student mental health. We also need increased funding for MH services, so that students can access as many counselling sessions as they need.

Housing

Housing is one of the most prominent issues students face. Many students are currently living in horrible conditions. We are taken advantage of by landlords and lettings agents, who charge illegal fees and abuse our deposits. I will fight for you to ensure you get the access to housing you deserve.

I want to continue the work of the Student Renters Group, hosting regular sessions throughout the year for all students to learn their rights as tenants. It's unfair for students at a financial disadvantage to be unable to participate in the experience of living in halls, so I will lobby the university to decrease their prices for university-owned accommodation.



I also want to end the prejudice against young people and students living in the university area. I oppose the Off Campus Discipline policy and would ensure this policy is undone. I will work closely with the university, student's union and local representatives to ensure students right to private life in the home is respected during their time at QUB.

Reforming Exceptional Circumstances

The exceptional circumstances procedure is supposed to offer students a helping hand in difficult times. However, the current process at our university is difficult to navigate as students are unfamiliar with it, it has uncertain guidelines and extensive response times. Despite the fact exceptional circumstances is there to help students, it can increase their anxieties even further.

During the pandemic, the university has made some valuable changes to exceptional circumstances. Students are now able to self-certify their exceptional circumstances for a period of 14 days, compared to 5 days previously. I would lobby the university to keep this change in place moving forward. I would also fight for a new more visible exceptional circumstances process. I would like to create a new online system where students can submit their form and receive updates on its progress, rather than having to wait lengthy periods of time for confirmation. I would also like to provide further training for Course Representatives on how the procedure works.

Improving Access To Hardship Fund

In the past two years, at least 45% of students have worried about basic living expenses. There has been a drastic increase in students who are struggling with rent payments, facing digital poverty and utilising food banks.

COVID-19 has impacted student groups massively, leaving 80% of students across the region struggling financially. Moving forward, the university needs to make our hardship fund more accessible. Since 2015, the amount of students applying to the QUB Hardship Fund has risen by 14.1%, but the amount of applications approved by the university has only risen by 0.4%.

It's not acceptable that students experience financial pressures to fund their degrees. I will fight to increase funding to the hardship fund, hold regular sessions for students to explain the hardship application process and hold weekly "drop-in" sessions for students who are struggling with their finances and need someone to speak to. I will also work to reform the "managing your money" sessions students are asked to complete upon receiving the fund, as students have previously expressed that these sessions can feel demeaning and embarrassing.

