

VOTE

VÓTÁIL

KATIE **NÍ CHLÉIRE** **FOR PRESIDENT**

MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

SUPPORT STUDENT NURSES

REFUND TUITION FEES

CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2030



@KATIENICHLEIRE



@VOTEKATIEFORPRESIDENT



**STUDENTS HAVE HAD ENOUGH. IT'S TIME FOR RADICAL CHANGE.
VOTE FOR CHANGE FROM THE IST - 4TH MARCH AT QUBSU.ORG**

WHO AM I?

I'm Katie, and I'm running to be your SU President!

Is mise Katie, agus táim ag rith chun a bheith mar Uachtarán Aontas na Macléinn!

I graduated with a degree in Social Work last March, and worked in health services throughout the first lockdown.

I'm an activist who campaigns on many issues including mental health & suicide prevention, Irish Language Rights, reproductive justice, healthcare equality, workers' rights and climate change.

For the last nine months, I have been your Welfare Officer in the Students' Union.



WHY AM I RUNNING?

Throughout my time as Welfare Officer during COVID-19, I have seen first-hand how the mental health of students has been neglected and the profits of the University prioritized. I am running to change that and **ensure mental health is the number one priority**.

Student mental health was at breaking point before the pandemic, but **we have been impacted more than almost anyone else as a result of COVID-19**. We have lost jobs, been trapped in lockdowns in university accommodation, suffered serious financial hardship, and experienced a **total lack of support** available from the University.

We have also been **blamed and scapegoated** by the media for COVID-19, and **penalized unfairly and unjustly** by the university for behaviour off-campus. **I want to lead you, the students, in campaigning for what you deserve**. Profits are consistently prioritized over student wellbeing by the University, and **this is unacceptable**.

It needs to change and if you elect me as President, it will.

WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DATE?

This past year as Welfare Officer, I have:

- **Secured SU input into choosing a new counselling services**, a service that gives more choice and more flexibility for students.
- Successfully secured **changes to the Exceptional Circumstances policy**, increasing the amount of days available for an extension from 5 to 14, and introducing a new COVID-19 category of self-certification
- **Secured food packages & wellbeing support** for student self-isolating in university accommodation and private accommodation
- **Successfully lobbied** the NI Executive with the **Support Student Health Heroes** campaign to provide additional funding to healthcare students, and **secured a £2000 payment for nursing, midwifery and social work students**.
- Signed the Students' Union up to a national scheme to **redevelop our approach to mental health**
- Led **Project Choice**, the Students' Union pro-choice campaign



I HAVE DELIVERED AS YOUR WELFARE OFFICER SO FAR, BUT IN ORDER TO MAKE THE CHANGES STUDENTS NEED, I AM ASKING FOR YOU TO ELECT ME AS PRESIDENT.

RADICAL ACTION FOR STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

As a result of COVID-19, **more students than ever before are struggling with their mental health**. We need to radically transform the way we approach mental health and give **every student the support they need to succeed**.

Puppy-petting days and yoga isn't going to solve the student mental health crisis. We need to **tackle the problems at the source**, and reform the structures and the environment that result in poor mental health.

That includes:

- Tackling the **financial pressures** on your mental health by **scrapping course costs** and identifying the hidden costs of education
- Tackling the **academic pressures** on your mental health, including removing bunched deadlines to lessen burnout
- Providing everyone with **access to Mental Health First Aid training**, so you know how to support your mates
- Ensure **consistent, long-term investment** in University support services

The OMNI campaign identified loneliness as a significant contributing factor to poor mental health. This year, students have been **lonelier than ever**, as we have worked from home, with limited social outlets available. We need to **build a community for students** even in the virtual world, so students can connect and make friends, wherever they're based.



FREE & LIBERATED EDUCATION

University education shouldn't be a commodity – it should be **free and accessible to all**.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the massive **cracks and flaws in the current education system**; the marketized system which places barriers on people from different socio-economic and social backgrounds, and which exploits our International students.

That's why I would **lobby the government to waive all student debt** from this year, and refund students who paid up front.

Education is a social good – the more opportunities we have to learn and grow, results in benefits for everyone. With a more educated society, we can **tackle social injustices**, and provide opportunities for economic growth. I will work with our national unions to **scrap tuition fees**, and to lobby for **free and accessible education for all**.

I will also campaign for **education to be liberated** and so we have truly accessible online teaching, especially for students with disabilities. I will also campaign for the University to become a **University of Sanctuary**, to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees have access to education. We also need to change how international students are treated by the University. Too often, they are **exploited as cash cows** and given far too little support. This isn't good enough and I will work with international students to ensure their rights are protected.

CLIMATE ACTION

As a student, I was a member of the Climate Action Group from the start, and was proud to actively campaign for the **QUB Green New Deal**. Despite the massive support from students, the university has **refused to act on climate change** and still has almost ten MILLION pounds invested in fossil fuels, while claiming to be interested in sustainability. I believe it's beyond time for **radical action to secure an unwavering commitment** from Queen's to **divest from fossil fuels** and take climate change seriously, including by committing to being carbon neutral by 2030.

PAY STUDENTS ON PLACEMENTS

Over 1,000 students across nursing, midwifery, social work and medicine degrees graduated early to join the workforce and helped **lead the fight against COVID-19**. These students, and consequentially, their families, are placed at **high risk of contracting COVID-19**, and yet they are penalised if they're required to self-isolate. As one of those students, I have first-hand experience of how daunting and difficult that time was, working in a frontline service during a period of immense uncertainty across the world. At present, we have hundreds of students across the university on placements in health services, which they receive **zero pay** for. This is unacceptable. In the second wave of COVID-19, these **students were refused pay**, a decision I was proud to help **lead the fight** against in the student movement, with the **Support Student Health Heroes** campaign.



After months of lobbying, we successfully secured a £2000 payment for these students, but there is so much more to do. Despite the hard work and dedication of medicine students, they have been left behind in this support, with no clarity on why this is. Students deserve **fair pay and support** when on placements during their degree, to ensure they can support themselves and their families. **I will lead a successful campaign to secure pay** for students and **deliver justice** for them.

HOUSING

This year, more than ever, students have been **exploited and taken advantage** of when it comes to their housing. Hundreds of students signed rental contracts in the private sector for this academic year before the beginning of the pandemic, and found themselves **trapped paying for houses they cannot live in**. Hundreds more moved up to Belfast, on the promise of an 'authentic' University experience but found themselves needing to move home after just a few weeks.

I will **passionately campaign** for you to be able to **suspend your rental contract at no penalty** and be able to **cancel your contract free of charge**.

This year, we secured **rent breaks** for students in Queen's Accommodation, and the ability to cancel contracts with no additional conditions or fees. We need to see this continue, so that **no student is financially disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control**. I will also work with Residential Assistants to ensure they have **worker's rights and fair pay**.

If elected, I will **lobby for action from Belfast City Council**, to **hold landlords to account** for the dangerous, damp houses they let to students for extortionate rent costs. **Students are exploited** by being charged ridiculous amounts for tiny bedrooms in over-crowded HMOs, and **enough is enough**. I will also work with housing activists to campaign for the **abolishment of letting fees**. I would also campaign to **scrap off-campus discipline penalties** by challenging it in the courts. You have a right to a private life and QUB is violating this right with its current off-campus policies.

IRISH LANGUAGE RIGHTS

We have made progress in the past year regarding the rights of Gaeilgeoirí with the *New Decade, New Deal* approach introducing an Irish Language Commissioner. However, **Queen's is still refusing to lead on this** and continuing to and refuses to introduce bilingual signage in the buildings on campus. This is **outright discrimination** against Gaeilgeoirí – minority languages are recognised in Ireland, Scotland and Wales; why not here? I will fight to ensure that **bilingual signage** is erected across campus, including in the new Students' Union building, and that the Irish Language receives the **recognition and status that it deserves**. Is **cearta daonna iad cearta teanga**, agus tá sé thar am go bhfuil na cearta seo againn anseo sa Tuaisceart.

