

Vice-President's Report: QMUSU AGM

Within my remit at QMUSU this year, there have been a number of successes and developments, despite the ongoing and lasting impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The student experience has been significantly different this year, with students having to adapt to more time online and digitally, and the social aspect of university life we're all so familiar with being drastically altered, but the way in which our members, sports clubs, societies, staff and students have risen to the challenge has been exceptional. This report will illustrate the key areas of work and successes throughout the past year.

Events

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we were forced to re-evaluate the way we welcomed our students to QMU in September. With the use of The Tent on campus for the first half of the year, we were able to plan forty-one events in our four-week Welcome to QMU programme. While over half of these had to be cancelled due to changes to government guidance, we were able to deliver seventeen events to students in person and online.

Although lower than in previous years, we still received 609 bookings for the events which were able to run as planned.

As regulations meant we couldn't run our usual Freshers' Fair in the Sports Hall, we introduced two Student Opportunities Days, where external companies, charities, and university departments came to exhibit to students. Moving through the semester, we were able to offer students the opportunity to book slots in The Tent for giveaways, brunch sessions, Nintendo Wii gaming, and more, all of which was within increasingly restrictive coronavirus restrictions.

In January 2021, and in light of new lockdown measures being introduced across the country, QMUSU entered into a partnership with Native, a student events company. This agreement gives you access to online events and activities through the Native platform (www.qmusuevents.native.fm). Events included a Gavin & Stacey quiz with a member of the cast, music events, virtual escape rooms, 'cook-a-longs' and more. The platform also gives us, and our students the opportunity to host our own online and in person events on the site, giving student-led events a more professional edge.

Grand Ball

The 2020 Sports & Societies Grand Ball Awards were initially postponed to September 2020 after the first lockdown was introduced. Once it was evident that September was not a viable option, we took the decision to roll our booking forward to Spring 2021. At the time of writing, we are actively exploring the option to hold a smaller, shorter, awards ceremony. Ideally this would be held at the Edinburgh Corn Exchange, with a small crowd present in person, and livestreamed wider for our S&S members to watch from around the world.

Criteria for the awards were also amended in January 2021 in order to better suit the disrupted year of activity we were in.

S&S

In an unprecedentedly challenging year for all of us, I'm incredibly proud of the way that our Sports & Societies have been able to adapt to varying, and regularly changing government and governing body guidance in the way they have.

In September, our societies were forced to move online and not meet in person. This presented huge challenges for member recruitment, particularly first-year students who haven't had the opportunity to meet them in person. Sports teams were permitted to train in person, in line with both government and governing body guidance, which would change frequently as East Lothian was moved up and down the Scottish Government's protection levels. Despite the massive change to how our S&S had to operate, this year we have still recruited over 500 members, an absolutely incredible achievement, and testament to the hard work of our 192 student committee members.

We also welcomed several new sports and societies to the S&S family, too. I've worked with students to form eleven new sports teams and societies across the last academic year. Some of these, like Chill Out, have been formed to provide more online opportunities for students to relax and be social, whereas others, like Swim and 36/76 Production, have been laying the foundations for when restrictions allow them to return in person fully.

While in person activity has been significantly limited for obvious reasons, we still have been able to return seven of our sports teams to in-person training. **Football, Rugby, Hockey, Netball and Cheer** were able to return for a period in Semester 1, under extensive restrictions from government and sport governing bodies.

There has been a vast amount of online activity taking place also, **Tin Tub Theatre / Drama Society** also regularly share performances from their members from within their own homes, in their 'Quarantine! Camera! Action!' series. **Cheer, Hockey and Netball** have all continued to run online workouts, exercise sessions and social events for their members throughout the lockdown restrictions.

We may be approaching the end of the year, but there are still a number of larger scale S&S activities planned to take place. **Musical Theatre** are rehearsing hard for their online show, Miss Rona, which will premiere online in May. The show has been written this year by members of the committee, and is being filmed, performed and shown exclusively online from members' own homes. Similarly, **Dance**, while unable to participate in their usual competitions calendar this year, are working towards their online showcase at the end of the semester also.

I'd like to formally record my sincere thanks and appreciation to all 192 of our student committee members for their hard work and determination this year. Although this has been far from an ideal year, to reach the numbers of students we have, and to deliver the innovative, imaginative events, activities and socials that you have delivered under guidance which changes regularly, and often without advance notice is nothing short of incredible, and I'm thoroughly grateful to all who have volunteered their time and energy to do this.

QMYou Move

Following the festive break, and armed with the knowledge that lockdown measures in Scotland would last until at least March 2021, I worked with a small group of S&S committee members as well as SU and University staff on the QMYou Move programme. The group aimed to promote as much movement, exercise, and activity as possible, using a shared Strava club to track all progress. The challenge was open to our students, staff, friends of QMU, and our local community, all of whom were challenged to help us reach 2,021 hours across a six-week period. Although we fell short of our initial target, as a community over 1,600 hours were logged by almost 200 participants. We know that some students have found motivation and encouragement from the online community we created, and found it useful to keep them moving and active during lockdown.

Movember

In November, our S&S community, led by **Men's Rugby**, committed to raising awareness and fundraising for the Movember campaign. The 'Move for Movember' challenge asked our students to move a total distance of 60km over the month of November, which reflects the 60 men lost to suicide every hour globally. Some students went above and beyond, setting fitness and exercise challenges to raise more money for the cause. This is an annual campaign, and in spite of coronavirus restrictions meaning we could not get together to fundraise and run awareness events, a staggering **£7,485** for the charity, which was set up to raise awareness of men's mental health and testicular cancer. This is a magnificent achievement, and is over double the total raised pre-COVID in 2019.

Working with the University / External Organisations

Within my role as Vice-President, I have sat on a number of university committees within my remit of the student experience, and help to plan for the response and return from COVID.

Looking externally, this year I have chaired the SSS Sabbatical Forum, a group of sabbatical officers with responsibilities for sport at institutions across the country. Through this forum, I also sit on the SSS Executive Committee, and the BUCS Advisory Group, both of which are focused on the return to sport, and development of student sport and physical activity this year and in future years.

I represent students on the University Court (the governing body of the University), Senate (the controlling academic board), the Student Experience Committee, Student Recruitment Workstream, Employability Strategy working group, and Studiosity working group.

Myself and the Student President also regularly meet with the Principal, and with the General Manager we meet regularly with the Deputy Principal and University Secretary through the Students' Union Partnership Group (SUPG). Both of these meetings have been absolutely critical over the past year as it's given us an opportunity to raise critical student issues with the senior leadership team directly.