

manifesto
Leonie Malin
for DoEd



Manifesto

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1. Introduction

So many of us are looking to the future with a fair amount of fear, not knowing whether our academic qualifications and experiences will be enough to help us navigate unprecedented levels of uncertainty in today's world. Although we may not yet fully realize the implications of the pandemic, it is sure to have a transformative effect on the nature of education for years to come, far beyond simply accelerating the move towards online learning and teaching. The changes and challenges that have been amplified as a result of the pandemic require a determined, experienced, and forward-thinking approach to confront them.

As the Director of Education, I would prioritize a holistic approach to all issues related to academic representation, with a key focus on three issue areas:

- 1) Expanding and improving consultation and communication
- 2) Promoting student-centered policies and support mechanisms
- 3) Encouraging the implementation of an intersectional strategy

These issue areas contain a variety of ongoing projects I aim to strengthen and new initiatives I hope to introduce, all of which are explained in the following sections. This manifesto outlines my vision for encouraging exceptional academic representation in St Andrews and my hopes for what could be accomplished during my term as a Sabbatical Officer. The role I am standing for is an incredibly demanding one, but I am confident I can rise to the challenge and thrive as the Director of Education.

My 3.5 years in St Andrews have been constantly defined by my desire to improve student representation and participation. My two-year experience as a Class Representative in the School of Geography and Sustainable Development taught me to raise student concerns within School structures, while my roles on the Environment Subcommittee have provided me with insight into the advantages of working for the Students' Association. While working under two Rectors, Srdja Popovic (2017 – 2020) and Dr Leyla Hussein OBE (2020 – present), I have developed my skills as an activist, campaigner, and communicator within the University's institutional structures. I will draw upon the various extracurricular positions I have held to inform my holistic strategy to directing matters related to education.

I used to think it was almost impossible for one person to make a meaningful impact, but the past four years have shown me the opposite is true. I recognize the power individuals hold in shaping the systems governing their lives. I know how crucial it is to have the right person representing you, fighting for you, and advocating for positive change. I promise to be the right person for this job and follow through on the goals set out in this manifesto.

I hope to count on your support on March 4th and 5th!



Leonie Malin Höher

4th Year International Relations and Sustainable Development

2. Strengthening the Foundation

The common theme of this section is maintaining and expanding current channels of consultation and communication to accurately represent student voices in decision-making. I recognize the ongoing initiatives that have been led by Amy Gallacher and the DoEds who served before her and I see the inherent value in maintaining current workstreams to ensure no progress is lost when a new person takes on the role. I want to see the foundation of academic representation in St Andrews remain strong and productive, with accessibility and inclusivity at the forefront.

2.1. *Sustaining Lecture Capture*

As a result of the rapid move to online teaching and learning, Lecture Capture has become commonplace for most modules. Aside from a few instances, this move has been handled smoothly with few issues related to privacy and distribution of recordings. In a sense, the pandemic has already accelerated the advancement of Lecture Capture more broadly and sustainably across the University and this progress should be maintained once teaching moves back to in-person delivery. It is likely many lecturers are now more amenable to adopting Lecture Capture as the default and I believe I could take advantage of these unique circumstances to ensure this resource is consistently employed by more users than ever before. The potential for the proliferation of Lecture Capture to alleviate concerns for students with disabilities or other varying circumstances is promising for the increased accessibility for all students. However, I am aware of the challenges and concerns still remaining among staff on this issue and if elected, I would consult closely with them to ensure implementation solutions are suitable for everyone.

2.2. *Accessibility of Resources*

Similar to section 2.1, one bright side of the pandemic has been the significant improvement of the accessibility of digital resources and texts. Many more texts have been made accessible online to address the lack of opportunities many students have had to make use of University libraries and facilities. While this represents progress in some respects, not all concerns have been accounted for. Problems with access to specific resources depend very much on the School in question and cannot be solved through a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, it is necessary to adopt a practical, holistic strategy to adapt the accessibility of resources to students in varying geographical locations, work environments, degree courses, financial situations, and personal circumstances. I believe in the value of expanding the quantity and quality of digital resources while retaining the provision of physical texts that complement students' experiences in a variety of Schools. In my past experience as a Class Representative (CR), students expressed concern when lecturers were reluctant to provide easily accessible reading lists for their modules. I hope to cultivate an environment in which students can always openly express and discuss their concerns with the resources offered to them. Library staff work incredibly hard to ensure students have access to a variety of digital resources, databases, and academic literature and as DoEd, I look forward to collaborating with library representatives and students to work towards addressing the diverse, often School-specific concerns about resources.

2.3. *Safety of Study Spaces*

The lack of study spaces available to safely and comfortably work within during the pandemic has been heavily affecting students' abilities to study effectively. Concentration, motivation, and mental health have been negatively affected because of this. We may see more study spaces open

back up despite teaching continuing online, but not in the same quantity as we had access to just one year ago. As DoEd, I would work closely with library staff and student representatives to ensure enough spaces are available to students as soon as it is safe. I aim to help find alternative spaces around town as the capacity of libraries and cafes will likely remain reduced. My top priority would be to ensure the safe provision and use of these spaces in accordance with Scottish Government regulations. Additionally, I would like to create or support a wellbeing initiative specifically focusing on creating comfortable spaces in home environments for online studying because advice on this matter has not been as clear and well-circulated as it could be.

Beyond the effects brought about by the pandemic, I would also turn my attention to the recurring issues creating pressures on study space. The growth witnessed in the student population at the start of this academic year will have long-term effects on local study spaces, the majority of which were already highly sought after. Some spaces are not well known to students and could be advertised more effectively. To address current and future issues with space, improved communication is essential – students need to be made aware of the University’s plans for reallocating the functions of certain spaces (e.g. remodeling existing units or moving departments out of town) and for providing new options (e.g. the acquisition of new buildings) in a timely manner. The student body’s future study habits will be profoundly impacted by spending more than a year studying remotely, so I plan to consult widely with CRs during the first few months of my role to remedy any concerns that may be associated with new behaviors and requirements.

2.4. School Presidents and Class Representatives

The relationships between the DoEd, School Presidents (SPs), and CRs are absolutely critical to the success of the mechanisms of representation which they uphold. Aside from providing training to CRs and SPs, I hope to build strong relationships with them and foster a sense of community and solidarity. CRs and SPs are at the heart of academic representation and carry out the crucial day-to-day activities needed to support a strong system of student consultation in St Andrews.

2.4.1. School Presidents

As DoEd, I would make it a priority to strengthen the transition process between School Presidents and always provide them with the support and resources they need to excel in their roles. Although I have not had the opportunity to serve as a School President myself, I have served under two SPs and gained insight into requirements of the role and challenges associated with garnering student engagement. I would rely heavily on the feedback offered by SPs and work closely with them to improve their experiences and enhance the continuity of their workstreams despite frequent turnover processes. To do this, I would like to create and maintain a centralized record of SP-led initiatives and key contacts for current and future SPs to refer back to, if it doesn’t exist already. I would also do my best to make myself available for individual meetings as issues arise. A key element of my role would be to amplify the concerns brought by SPs to Education Committee meetings or to me personally and accurately convey them to relevant University staff so they can be actioned effectively.

2.4.2. Class Representatives

From my own experience, I know how daunting it can be to put yourself forward as a Class Rep, let alone take full advantage of the role and build equal and productive relationships with staff. It can be incredibly challenging to encourage a high amount of feedback from peers

and use it to substantiate calls for change within Schools. Especially in the context of the pandemic, student engagement can be elusive. However, I believe this can be addressed through the sense of community and solidarity I mentioned before. Training sessions, introductory and regular events, and informal social settings online and in-person can go a long way in sparking connections between CRs and helping them to feel supported and motivated. CRs often have so many great ideas, not only to improve learning and teaching within their Schools but to enhance the overall student experience in St Andrews. As mentioned in section 2.4.1, I would rely on the contributions of SPs and CRs to develop strategies. If elected, I would like to encourage community-building events and complementary skills sessions to encourage solidarity and innovative ideas among CRs of different years. Together with the SPs, I believe I can support initiatives to improve communication, collaboration, and community among CRs which will give them the tools and the space to pursue their ideas and projects effectively.

Lastly, I am eager to work closely with the Faculty Presidents for Arts & Divinity and Science & Medicine to create an organized and efficient leadership team for directing academic representation. In the initial months of my term, I would hope to learn from the Faculty Presidents and run several sessions to set up a joint strategic plan for the year ahead.

2.5. Encouraging Postgraduate Participation

Unfortunately, postgraduate students are not always valued and included in the community in the way they should be. Postgrads may face circumstances very different from those which undergraduates confront, including caring responsibilities, jobs, or other factors. Again, this means a one-size-fits-all approach to representation would not do any good. Through more effective consultations, I hope to help postgrads feel inspired to participate in shaping the student experience and sharing their enthusiasm for education with the wider student body. I want St Andrews student leaders and other decision-makers to better understand the needs and values of postgraduate students in order to adapt attitudes, policies, and support accordingly. I hope to work alongside the Postgraduate Academic Convener, Postgraduate Development Officer, and postgraduate societies; taking point from them to build on current initiatives encouraging more postgraduates to participate in Class Representative or informal society roles and strengthen their voices within their Schools and the Students' Association.

2.6. The Role of the DoEd

If elected as the Director of Education, I would be responsible for multiple key workstreams which require the support and collaboration of many students and staff. However, the importance and functions of the DoEd role are not clear to many students. Through more effective communication using social media posts and videos, I would prioritize the clarification of the role and ensure a greater proportion of students are aware of the way in which it affects their experiences at the University. I believe it is essential for students to know who is representing them and have access to these individuals as well as the content of their goals.

Aside from leading the Education Executive Committee, participating in the Education Committee, working with the Proctor's Office, training Class Representatives and School Presidents, sitting on various working groups, and collaborating with University departments, I would also be working with the other Sabbatical Officers on various projects and representing St Andrews students to other institutions of higher education. I would be involved in the [Enhancement Themes](#), run by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, which aim to improve the overall student

learning experience and meet the values and needs of an increasingly diverse student community. This part of the job addresses big questions related to the future of education, research projects, and diversity of our learning communities. Outward-facing tasks such as this in which the DoEd represents St Andrews students at a higher level are not very well known among the student body, despite their importance, and I would aim to raise more awareness about these.

3. Building on the Basics

In this section, my approach to promoting student-centered policies will be expanded upon. As DoEd, I would want to help ensure the support mechanisms currently available are continuously reviewed and improved upon, from School-specific and Students' Association structures to accessibility and inclusivity concerns. I hope to build upon the foundations described in previous sections and do my part to contribute to the long-term evolution and improvement of the DoEd role.

3.1. *Openness and Accessibility*

I think many students still face confusion regarding the influence Sabbatical Officers have in representing their concerns and their roles in shaping the student experience in St Andrews. To address some of the issues with transparency and clarity regarding the role of the DoEd, I would like to implement a few new strategies. If the other elected Sabbs agree, I would like to implement a semi-regular 'behind the scenes' takeover on the @standrewsunion Instagram account in which the day-to-day tasks and the broader objectives of each Sabb are highlighted and saved. This way, students could always reference social media for more information and see their representatives communicating in a more personalized format. Additionally, it would be great to encourage more engagement with the IGTV function and host longer form conversations in which the Sabbs speak with each other or speak on salient issues as they arise. Although Sabbs on STAR has been ongoing, many students do not engage with STAR and would be more likely to engage with Instagram content. I know a more coordinated social media presence could help so many students better understand the DoEd role and the contextual information surrounding important decisions.

Past Sabbatical Officers have worked incredibly hard to make themselves available to students and rapidly respond to concerns as they arise. I would maintain a policy of openness and approachability during my term, ensuring students feel like they can always reach out to me with ideas, thoughts, or concerns about academic representation. One of the most important aims of the DoEd is to ensure no student faces disadvantages or unnecessary challenges throughout their education. I want to make sure students are familiar with this aim and not only feel connected to the work the DoEd does, but take an active role in providing feedback on teaching and learning.

3.2. *Collaboration with the Proctor's Office*

A key element of the DoEd's role is to maintain a positive and productive relationship with the Proctor (Vice-Principal Education), who is responsible for overseeing and developing the University's teaching and learning strategy, practices, and policies as well as carrying out managerial responsibilities for Student Services, the Chaplaincy, and the Students' Association. I would seek to sustain the good working relationships between the Sabbs and Proctor to ensure student voices are accurately reflected in all decisions directly affecting their wellbeing and educational experience. I see opportunities to involve more students in decision-making processes and I know there has been progress made to include more voices in various working groups and

committees. As DoEd, I would try to build on this progress and help to ensure student participation is always valued and effective.

3.3. Representation on University Court

One of the methods available to the DoEd through which they may influence academic representation and shape the learning and teaching in St Andrews is through having a seat (and a vote) on University Court, the highest governing body of the University. While this is by no means the most important part of the role, it is a highly significant one. Aside from the Rector, Rector's Assessor, and Senior Lay Member, the DoEd and Association President are the only other representatives selected by the student body among 26 Court members participating in high-level strategic decision-making. I believe this power has been under-emphasized for many years, which has contributed to the widespread lack of knowledge among the student body about the Court, its functions, and its members. As DoEd, my plan would be to build communication and closer relationships with Court members as well as support initiatives to increase the accessibility of the Court and visibility of decisions taken. The Students' Association and Rector have collaborated in the past to run student-centered campaigns and represent student interests on Court. The Rector's Report is usually co-created by the Association President, DoEd, Rector, and Rector's Assessor. However, I see opportunities for wider collaboration and would like to work with the Association President to pursue these. I think working more closely with the Rector and their Committee to increase knowledge about Court and the importance of amplifying student feedback and diverse experiences would significantly improve academic representation.

3.4. Employability and Widening Access

The relationship between students and the Careers Center has not always been as clear-cut or productive as it could be, even though many students face significant anxiety throughout their academic life because of career-related insecurities. To address this, I aim to work within existing and planned structures dedicated specifically to creating more clarity on the resources offered by the Careers Center and complement their initiatives to integrate careers into the curriculum and improve upon the delivery of services. SPs and CRs in so many Schools have already made progress to integrate more careers events into their workstreams, although this work could be coordinated more closely among Schools and with the Careers Center. Tailoring support to students' needs and degree courses would go a long way to helping them feel more prepared to enter the world of work during or after their studies. I aim to support the Director of Student Development and Activities in their facilitation of this work and ensure students are receiving the guidance they require at all times.

Another aspect I am keen to address is widening access to higher education. It is no secret that there are various barriers keeping students from getting the most out of their time at university or limiting their abilities to enter higher education in the first place. To confront widening access issues, I hope to build mutually beneficial relationships between myself and the Member for Widening Access and Participation as well as the widening access working group to identify ways in which I could represent student needs regarding learning and teaching more accurately. From available financial support to accommodation challenges and ableism, the challenges related to widening access are multi-faceted and numerous. Addressing them is a long-term goal, but it is something I hope to contribute to in any way I can for the duration of my term because I believe it is particularly important for improving academic representation and incorporating intersectionality into higher education issues.

3.5. *Alumni and Activist Networks*

Related to work on employability, I would like to collaborate very closely with the Association President to investigate how the network of St Andrews alumni could be leveraged to better support current students' transitions into the world of work and how they could be engaged to share knowledge and contacts. Alumni like Dr Fiona Hill who stood in the Rector's Election 2020 have expressed their desire to continue connecting their work to the St Andrews student community and contributing to making progress on key issues that have affected the University for decades, including affordability and diversity. If we could set up a more coordinated program for students to engage with alumni, the potential for social change, greater funding, increased employability, and community-building would be enormous. To this end, I would take point from the Association President, the Alumni Officer, and St Andrews alumni to identify ways in which we could create mutually beneficial relationships between current students and alumni.

Additionally, I would like to work with the President to initiate a project with the current Rector to establish a fellowship of activists, in which students could access volunteering or employment opportunities with influential activists around the world. This could take the form of internships, part-time work experiences, or volunteering. This way, the Rector could provide support to students by connecting them to their own personal network and students could provide support to busy activists while gaining professional experience. I see so many opportunities for creating connections between students and professionals that could help to ease their worries about transitioning from university life into employment.

3.6. *Diverse Learning Communities*

Although there is a long way to go regarding diversity in St Andrews, our learning communities are already quite diverse and different needs must be met with tailored support mechanisms. Commuting students, students studying remotely, as well as lifelong, flexible, and evening learners sometimes face a lack of support because they do not follow the standard degree path. I hope to contribute to changing this and improve support mechanisms and the availability of opportunities for community-building. To do so, I would work alongside the Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer and their team as well as engage with staff and other representatives to develop the ideas they think would be most valuable in better supporting and including these learning communities. To better address diversity and inclusion issues in St Andrews, I propose a greater focus on intersectionality, explained in the next section of this manifesto.

4. **Advocating for Intersectionality**

The final section of this manifesto focuses on the value of applying an intersectional lens to all matters related to academic representation. The projects I am personally most passionate about and the importance of intersectionality will be explained in more detail in the following subsections. The goals in this section represent a long-term perspective on education in St Andrews and would not take precedence over the immediate tasks associated with the DoEd role.

4.1. *Intersectionality in Education*

Intersectionality refers to how an individual's different identities and characteristics intersect to shape their experiences of privilege and discrimination. The term was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an influential critical race theorist, and has since affected many social movements and theories. From my perspective, explicitly integrating intersectionality into academic policies would

translate into greater appreciation for the ways in which disability, class, race, gender, sexuality, religion, age, or physical appearance, to name just a few characteristics, affect students' lived experiences and their abilities to benefit from the education provided by the University. The University of St Andrews [Strategy 2018-2023](#) acknowledges the importance of addressing the effects these characteristics have on the student experience, but does not often reference their interconnectedness. Higher education has historically been a space dominated by very privileged thinkers and theorists, which results in the perpetuation of oppressive structures of power and knowledge. The mainstream conversation most often excludes the voices of those most directly impacted by a given structure or policy. Instead of brushing over the fact that individual experiences are constantly affected by these interlocking systems of inequality, I believe the University should apply intersectionality in educational policy and practice. The benefit of this would be greater staff and student engagement in a way that resonates with their values and individual experiences. As DoEd, I would aim to co-design a proposal on this issue with other student representatives and individuals in order to bring this idea to the Proctor's and Principal's Offices, who could help us build a practical method through which an intersectional lens could be applied to matters of education. At the heart of the idea is a meaningful acknowledgement of the way in which multiple forms of prejudice hamper equal opportunity to access and benefit from education and how respect for the voices of those most affected can be cultivated.

4.2. Collaborating with Local Groups and Representatives

To collaborate with local groups, I would aim to co-create initiatives with the Association President and integrate my ideas into their strategy. Several organizations in St Andrews are already working to integrate a more intersectional approach into the academic community. If elected, I would like to work more closely with them to ensure their initiatives and ideas are elevated to higher levels at the University. The [Third Generation Project](#), a think tank established by members of the School of International Relations about five years ago, is using education and research to enable social change for climate justice. They collaborate with students to affect change in a way which centers student voices and intentions, an approach to student-staff collaboration which is unfortunately not always widespread across the University. A project of theirs called 'Whitewashed St Andrews' aims to contribute to the movement among universities across the globe helping academia recognize its colonial history and the need to reform the educational system reflecting non-Western-centric, more diverse perspectives. As Director of Education, I would want to contribute to projects like this in any way I can and identify ways in which the DoEd and President could be more supportive of critical research and education projects in St Andrews.

Intersectionality encourages cross-community and cross-issue collaboration, which I believe can be achieved through more inter-departmental and inter-societal cooperation. I would aim to work with Directors of Teaching and School Presidents to assess their interest in emphasizing intersectionality through inter-departmental seminar events. Ideally, we could set up a seminar series in which educational or skills-based events are hosted every month. For example, the School of Biology and School of History might like to collaborate on a seminar about medical racism, which could demonstrate how different academic disciplines have been shaped by different social issues. This could contribute to employability and participation could result in the award of a certificate of completion. Additionally, Students' Association Subcommittees such as the Environment Subcommittee and Rector's Committee and other student societies have recently demonstrated commitments to implementing intersectionality in their activities, a development which demonstrates greater student interest in the issue and should be amplified by Sabbatical Officers who can make use of their close working relationships with staff. I would try to highlight this issue

more widely and support collaborative projects among SPs, Subcommittees, societies, and students to bring intersectionality to the forefront.

4.3. *Changing the Curriculum*

The above sections are closely related to current projects to amend the curriculum to better reflect the diversity of thought and experiences across the globe. Efforts to diversify the curriculum and make it more representative have gained traction in recent years and deserve more attention. To my knowledge at the time of writing, there are several active initiatives to ‘decolonize’ the curriculum, which are not fully integrated or as influential as they could be. Aside from the occasional speaker event and infographic, it is not easy to find information about these initiatives in St Andrews, despite widespread student interest. The ongoing project ‘Sustainability in the Curriculum’ aims to prioritize education for sustainable development is unfortunately not well-known among the student community and could benefit immensely from increased student contributions. I’m sure there are other related initiatives aiming to change the curriculum and improve the quality and content of learning and teaching at the University that I am not currently aware of but that could benefit from more student voices. If I were to be elected, I would be very enthusiastic about supporting efforts to amend the curriculum in St Andrews to better reflect the University’s commitments to inclusivity, diversity, and equality.

5. Concluding Thoughts

If you have actually managed to read this far, you are truly committed, and I thank you. There is not much left to say other than make sure to vote from Thursday March 4th to Friday March 5th! It is so important to elect officers whom you trust to accurately and enthusiastically represent your interests. I would be truly honored to be elected as the DoEd for 2021/2022 and strongly believe the range of roles I have held during my academic career in St Andrews would allow me to excel in each of the responsibilities associated with the position. I have great respect for the demands of the role, but I promise to handle them with determination, dedication, and enthusiasm at all times.

If elected, I will represent you to the best of my abilities and do everything within my power to make your experience in St Andrews as safe, supportive, and empowering as possible. I will always advocate for improved consultation and communication, student-centered policies and support mechanisms, as well as an intersectional approach to solving issues. My campaign is founded upon a belief in our collective ability to transform St Andrews for the better and to create the best possible educational experience for all students during their time here. We are in the midst of one of the most difficult and uncertain periods in recent history and must do everything we can to support each other and make the best out of these circumstances. Coming out of this period of crisis will not be easy, but I want to dedicate myself to making the transition as smooth as possible and taking advantage of it as an opportunity for change and progress.

Don’t forget to vote Leonie Malin for Director of Education!